A

STATESMAN'S LOVE

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"My friend, when you love, let it be a woman whom you can love for ever."—BALZAC.

BY ÉMILE BOUCHER.

IN THREE VOLS.

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BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

The last dark month of winter wore away. All looked bright and hopeful for the cause. England, unaware and inert, supposed us sleeping too. Kilmarnock had been once or twice to France for brief periods, always returning sadder and sterner. We were almost strangers now in manner, though beneath that ice of reserve imposed on me by Stuart's fanatic jealousy, yet existed the warm living stream of friendship for him, looking dumbly and wistfully from mine eyes when my tones were coldest. This, whether he saw or forbore to note, I knew not. The alienation seemed very grievous to him, yet he was too proud to make any sign of disquiet, accepting his banishment calmly and resignedly in appearance. Sir Burleigh, too, had changed

to him, and was stern and distant. Stuart himself was more civil and kinder than for a long period before, and there was more appearance of their old friendship reviving. Yet lines of bitterness, of unhappiness, deepened round Kilmarnock's mouth as, day by day, this icy, impalpable atmosphere of justice but no mercy settled itself about him. It affected me, not with more love to, but with a certain fear of Stuart, who showed an inflexibility of will in this that I had not before credited him with.

So I wronged my kindest friend by coldness, by avoidance. To me he was milord, to him I was milady—on my own part by order. Nor could praise, nor loving commendation, caresses, nor love itself, take out the sting to me of being forced and driven to this injustice.

True, I sometimes forgot it, in his cold and grave acceptance of it—tried to believe him indifferent, myself over-sensitive, over-egoistic, as to the value to his mind of my regard. This thought was extreme bitter to me, and induced reproaches for melancholy from Stuart, who took care not to remove the cause, but was harsh in calling me moody and intractable, telling me my manner was cold and repulsive, and praising that of the French dames, who, he averred, never suffered from gloom or sullenness.

"I am neither gloomy nor sullen," said I, hopeless of pity for this inward grief. "It is that I have come to the end of my resources for amusing you, nor can invent any, as could a Frenchwoman. You are a very tyrant to me," I continued, weeping in spite of myself at this cruel reproach, "and I—I have done my miserable best to content you."

"That you have not," said he sternly. "A woman of one half your ability had broke with half a dozen friendships and none been wiser; but you must needs put on deep mourning for Sergius, and let him see you malcontent on his account. As for him, he is his own chief mourner, and one might wonder, to see you both, what was hid in this dead and gone friendship. Some precious jewel, belike, that might have worn another name, had we but known."

"Sir," said I, "upon this I shall go to Leith. Your gay and witty Frenchwomen might smile at such railing. I am *autres choses*, nor will not put up with it, so assure yourself."

"With whom will you go to Leith, madam? Milord the martyr is pre-engaged, or would, doubtless, be at your disposition. Sir Burleigh! You could not take him through two-foot snow, and I am not at your ladyship's disposal for that business."

"I will go by myself," said I, my eyes blinded with tears of rage at this mockery. And throwing one corner of my plaid over my head, I turned from him, walking rapidly, over shoes in snow, in the direction not long since taken by a runner, to Leith.

"Him," thought I, "I can track." Or rather thought but little of what I was doing, aiming at a swift revenge for this, which I called cruelty, and he considered a deserved rebuke. "My God," thought I, walking swiftly through the soft new snow, "rebuke! What am I rebuked for?" I was conscious that stubborn pride would prevent his coming after me—and, granted a good start, I will, thought I, in extremest misery, lose myself in the hills, that he may find me in the morning dead. Rage and misery winged my footsteps. I went in true Highland fashion—swift, untiring. My blood boiled through my veins.

"Repulsive wretch," said I, "hasten away from the people who hate you. You were made but for solitude, for some wild and savage waste Any, the slightest human creature, heartless, brainless, would have more regard, more love, than your pitable truth, sincerity, can buy. She —that slight ephemeral creation—would float like a bubble on any breath of any mood, would

take the colour of any caprice, and satisfy the vanity, the self-love, the craving for novelty, which, together, make to some what they call love."

I must stop and shake the clogged snow from my shoes. Out of sight now of our lonely camp, alone! Are there wolves?—almost I dread it. The afternoon wears on. Choking down this fear I go on, swift, swifter. Oh, Leith! Can I walk the night through and anywise reach you? Entering a narrow pass between the hills I have to go more slowly, so many snow-covered stones strike unwary steps. It is dusky here, only the grey snow light, the everlasting silence of the hills. Shall I ever be found alive? My heart stops.

"It is early days, fool," I say bitterly, "to be acting chief mourner. You are tough—used to the cold. On! nor waste regret, even if you die. Others die, the loved, the valued. What of you? For you the snow is too soft a shroud, the stillness of its last sleep too painless."

On! The hot blood stills and sobers, dashed and cooled with fear—of what, 'twere hard to say, but the silence is intense; over the snowy waste only a moan of wind comes wandering through the pass. I start and shudder.

On, on! Grey shades of night begin to creep down the hill walls on either hand. The

dead silence makes me fearful of my own light footfall.

"Fool," I say, panting and breathless, "you will be silent soon for ever."

I slide on a stone and go down with a shock to my knees, fortunately in a drift, and rising, go on, cowering as from a blow, pulling the plaid forward, that if any frightful sights are near I may not see them. Counting my steps, I hear one that is not of them. On comes the horrid unreason of fear—it is a ghost. One of those shrieking ghosts Appin tells of in Gaelic, over the camp-fire. It has come after me, in that I laughed at it!

"Oh, do not kill me—do not!" I fly faster, calling this out to the savage solitude, which is peopled by such footsteps. Then summoning, not fortitude, but extremity of numbing fear, I slacken my frantic run and face round on the pursuer. My very heart stands still. There is nothing there, while all my senses tell me that but an instant gone there was! Has it glided past to lie in wait for me as I emerge? Oh, never! I will have this stone-bestrown ravine for a sepulchre, I cannot let that unpalpable presence seize me. Yet, 'tis too late even for that. My last steps have brought me, unseeing, to the mouth of the ravine; beyond lies the snowy steep of another

hill. Could I but gain it without crossing that fatal spot—there where the footsteps ceased! I stop paralysed. My God! My God! It will not wait for me! It is coming! I sink on my knees in the snow, holding up appealing hands, which are gently taken. It is Kilmarnock.

"Do not speak, Lady Clifford," says he, "you are frightened. I would have called out, but feared the echoes of these rocks, when you thought yourself alone, would frighten you. What is the mattter? Where are you going? To Leith? Why, my dear, to-night 'tis impossible—to-morrow you may. Has your guide gone on? What does it all mean, Lady Clifford? Stuff; this is flight. Tell me from whom, Helen."

"From—from him," say I, trembling and vengeful. "Do not stop me, milord. So much, if I die, will he be sorry."

"You poor girl," said he, "is that your wild justice on him? Was he sorry for Rohan? Helen, to his hurt, I will make him sorry for this. Is this the end of the indignity he has heaped on us both—on me? This his policy of depriving you of every friend, that he may play the tyrant unchecked? He saw you go? Helen, 'tis impossible. What! see you rush on a death by cold in these wild fastnesses, after

driving you to despair? Nay, my dear, he is human after all. Look around you and see, would any—the most cruel cateran in any our wild clansmen—allow you to run into this danger?"

Snow was beginning to fall thickly, piling itself on the rocks and boulders of the pass, obscuring the view every way. Looking around, I could not tell which way I had come, nor where was the outlet of the pass. On either side the frowning hills darkened momently more and more. Had I been blithe and happy, secure in the love and tender care of others, I should have been awe-struck at the terrific aspect night threw in advance on this savage place. Now I trembled and shivered as one palsy-struck, at the peril revealed on which I had rushed.

"'Twould have been but my desert," I moaned drearily, "he did not bid me come here —'twas my own doing."

"Who but would fly from cruelty?" said he. "Now, my dear, we must be going, or even my knowledge will be at fault."

"I cannot return, Sergius, I am not afraid now; there is no new terror in the night. Do you go on your way and leave me; you must know—you, a Highlander—how much of peace there is in solitude."

"I have, at any rate, had a pretty experiment of it lately," said he bitterly; "but I do not design to leave you, Lady Clifford, till I see you safe with your friends. Had I taken my usual homeward route you had now been safe in some snowdrift, costing someone an hour's grief, to be consoled by the reflection that it was your own doing."

"As it was," said I gloomily. "I cannot charge it upon another. I am a fool, in that I cannot brook reproach or unkindness, but must needs rush over shoes in snow to prove my sensibility, like some Madam of romance. Oh, Sergius, if you could but guess at my heart-ache when I came away, you would not laugh at the frantic folly this must seem to you."

"I am not laughing, my dear," said he, gravely. "Lend me your hand, Lady Clifford; we must, indeed, hasten."

He started as I placed my cold and icy hand in his, but wasted no more words, as another might, in wonderment at what was inevitable; and as, guided by him through the fast and blinding snow, we rapidly retraced the way to the camp, I felt, of all people, most miserable. Excitement and anger burnt out; only the dismalness of reproaches from Sir Burleigh awaiting me; the icy contempt of Stuart, who equally hated

and despised scenes, and desiderated etiquette, even in despair.

The camp-fire showed dinner waiting within the largest cave, Saunder removing saucepans from the fire, totally unconcerned by the snow-flakes, now but few and light. Outside, Stuart and Sir Burleigh were walking up and down, Stuart counselling patience in respect of me, which I gathered from the words: "She will be but a stone's-throw off, and will hear the signal for dinner."

"Ay," said Sir Burleigh irritably, "let her suffer the snowfall. How dared she go alone, wandering off! I have a mind to wish her lost awhile on the hills, to cure this errantry once for all. Ah! she is here, thank God! Come to me, madam."

"I will not," said I bitterly. "You have Sergius to thank that I am not dead, as you were wishing."

I had meant to be meek, to conciliate by submission; yet, I suppose, there is no slave but holds his own life dear, nor would revolt at hearing it lightly esteemed. The embers of wrath, which I had thought extinguished, blazed up again as, quitting Sergius' hand, I walked straight for our dwelling, followed by Sir Burleigh.

"Helen," said he sternly, letting fall the deer-skin curtain which was our door, "there are your things laid out for dinner. I give you five minutes to dress, and, by ——! if you are not ready then—after keeping us all waiting—I'll know why I am not obeyed. Put on your dry shoes."

"I will not!"

"Throw off that snowy plaid; no need for muffling; we dine within doors to-night."

"Go to your dinner, sir."

"When, madam, you are ready."

"I am not coming."

"Helen, one minute has gone."

"My mind is made up. I will not come."

"Two," said he, setting his teeth. In effect, he counted out the five, and I sat with crossed arms—defiant, immovable as stone.

"Then," said he, beside himself with fury at this defiance, "bethink you how our grandfathers tamed a rebel wife."

"How was that?" said I scornfully, anger steeling me against entreaty, as, snatching a riding-switch, he struck me a sharp severe blow across the shoulders.

I would not speak, the pain held me breathless; remembrance flashed across my mind that he had so struck the worthless, wretched woman

Alexis brought to the farm—yet but once. On me the sharp strokes showered down. I am sure he cannot, cannot but have been blinded by anger. He was breathless, as though wielding the light riding-switch was a labour. At length it broke, as with a bitter cry, wrung from me by pain, I caught at his hand.

"Well for you," said he, catching his breath. "And now, madam, change your insolent defiance. Take off those wet shoes."

"I cannot," said I, trying to withdraw the stiffening icy boots, with hands that seemed stiff and cold as they.

"I have, however, secured obedience," said he, in wrathful satisfaction at the attempt. "Shall I send you in some dinner, milady?"

"No," said I, indifferently and dully.

Then, as he withdrew at the dinner signal, I threw myself on the rude couch of dry heather, pillowing my head on my scorching arms.

"It only wanted this!" thought I, repeating Sandy's words, when he too had been degraded, punished—and then passed away from conscious thought to that blessed realm where oppressor and oppressed are for a time equal.

Roused by Sir Burleigh's entrance, late on in the night, I asked humbly enough for some water.

"Helen," said he, as he gave it, and passed his arm round me to raise me, that I might drink, "my dear, why did you tempt me to strike you?"

"I am sorry," said I, languidly, "but think no more of it. Will you give me some more water, sir? Oh, some more—oh, why cannot one have enough cold water!"

"You are fevered," said he, "and have drunk enough. What! the wet boots on still?" He drew them off, but with some trouble, and covering up my feet in a plaid, sat beside the bed, thinking.

"Helen," said he, presently, "I do not like the look of your face and eyes; either you are very angry with me or you are in a fair way to a fever. Give me your hand, God knows I am angry with myself enough!"

"I am not angry with you," said I, dully. "I own I did not think you would hurt me, but I deserve it, so think no more of it. I want more water—give me enough, this thirst parches me."

I seized the large goblet he brought, with hands that trembled with excessive eagerness for the cold icy spring-water, and drained it.

"I don't know what to do," said he, despairingly, as he took the cup from my burning hands.

"Let me go out in the snow," I implored,

"into some cold place, this is stifling—loop back the curtain; oh! I cannot breathe."

Sir Burleigh looped back the deerskin. The moon shone brightly over the the snow, lying everywhere around. In the camp was perfect silence; the embers of the large fire flickered, and one by one died out, and the calm scene without soothed away some of the fever and restlessness possessing me. Watching it in silence my hand held by Sir Burleigh, my eyes at length closed, and sleep, by the morning, found the fever away. Away, yet hovering near; burning thirst, the restlessness now of pain—for the heavy strokes on my shoulders had all but broke the skin, and showed changing and livid as burns.

Sir Burleigh was remorseful on their account, nor would believe himself forgiven. He must needs tell Sergius, whom I had desired to see; and poor Sergius' face was a study as he listened. I laughed.

"So," said I, "Sir Burleigh now desires to know, milord, was not those strokes too few, for a tired and disobedient wretch?"

Then turned away my face and wept. Sympathy from Sergius always affected me more than from any other; he it was who had comforted me in many trials.

"They are the first and last, Helen," said Sir

Burleigh, breaking the whip, "though I own you deserved them."

"Yes," said I, drying my tears, "justly—and after all," I added to Sergius, "'twas but a trifle."

"No doubt, no doubt," said he, trying to speak cheerfully, though his lips quivered. "A jest of Sir Burleigh, to show how severe he could be on occasion."

Sir Burleigh went out abruptly, responding to a call from Appin.

Sergius seized the whip and pieced it together. "This," said he bitterly, "in Sir Burleigh's hands, and a trifling punishment! Lady Clifford, why not tell me the truth, since I am here to help you? Helen," as slow tears dropped through my fingers, "I can see Sir Burleigh is alarmed at the result of this savagery, or he had not spoken of it to me. My dear, let me do what I can for you—you must be in torture. I could not be indifferent to heavy blows from a thing like that. Were you struck more than once? Nay, why should you not tell me? Sir Burleigh asked me if I could do nothing for a bruised arm. I am half a surgeon, for I studied it in France."

"'Tis but a few strokes," said I, drawing the plaid tighter round my shoulders, "such as you have doubtless often given to Boyd, was he disobedient."

"Thank God I have never struck a woman or child in my life!" said he; "but doubtless you are right to distrust me—to let an Edinbro' medico come, with all his learning and Latin—when in five minutes, was you amenable, I could half-cure these bruises."

"They will cure themselves," said I with a moan of pain—bitter tears at the degradation forcing themselves from my closed eyes. "Why has he dared speak of them?"

"Because he is no fool," said Kilmarnock bitterly, "nor wishes you dead of pyrexia—as you will be if they are untended."

"The better for me." Yet, sitting up, I threw the plaid from my shoulders, seeing Sergius start as the bruised and livid stripes met his gaze.

"My God!" said he, "'tis well I came—this is terrible!"

Sponged with some cold, strong liniment, covered with a linen kerchief, the plaid replaced, I thanked him.

"Helen," said he, his hands trembling, "once, long since, you likened me to the Samaritan. Could you but guess how I feel to these thieves you are amongst—my dear, to speak smoothly, to act patiently after this, is almost beyond me."

Tears of rage and grief were in his eyes. I

did not reply; faint and exhausted, all was to me nearly indifferent. Thieves or Samaritans, blows or blessings, what did it matter now? I was dumb, nor had any desire to speak—dumb in a waking trance, which heard and saw, yet was moveless.

"Sir," said he coldly, as Sir Burleigh re-entered, "if I may advise, this experiment of flogging is surely a dangerous one—even a Hanover soldier but seldom chances on severer hurts than these. I have done what I could, but pyrexia and death might result from them. You were best get Porteous out, or take Helen to Edinburgh."

"What is pyrexia?" said Sir Burleigh. "For God's sake acquit me of intentional brutality—I was mad."

"That, of course," said he. "It is, besides, not now the question. The bruises are very severe, it is just you should know that this is no temperature for such hurts—cold may mortify them. My God! what induced you to strike her? What had she done except offend—that—that—that——"

He stammered himself into an abrupt silence, and, lifting his bonnet in stiff salutation, went out. I closed my eyes, all this floated by with other images of pain and wrath—no mild or pleasant

thought mingled with the hurrying throng. Was this pyemia? I asked Sergius this, when he came in again presently in a milder mood, and found Sir Burleigh, dismally penitent, sitting beside me. Glad to be released he went out.

"No," said he, "think no more of pyemia, you were a magpie to listen." Over his arm he carried a short, sable-lined cloak, which he placed around my shoulders. "I bought it in Paris," said he, "but 'tis too effeminate for a Highlander. To tell truth, I thought of you while buying it. This, thought I, will suit Helen's beautiful sloping shoulders, and her lovely little Greek head will set in it stately as a queen's."

"It was but too good of you, yet——"

"Ah, refuse it, of course. Was Stuart to fling you a sheepskin 'twould be received with rapture and astonishment. I put off an audience at Court to get this for you."

"Then," said I, "I will receive it with rapture and astonishment."

"Which cannot, sweet, equal mine, when you have it on, at your loveliness in it. Do not laugh, it is true—you are not only the loveliest woman in the world, but have the most charm of air and manner."

"Lovely now I cannot be," thought I, the

momentary rally reflected from his life and animation relapsing into a semi-stupor of pain. I bade him go, weary of everything. Since Sir Burleigh could turn oppressor, the solid ground might crumble from beneath my feet, the sky fall. Sir Burleigh re-entering resumed his seat beside me. I saw, as though unseeing, the gloom and sadness of his aspect. Well, he should not have flung me bruised and shattered here. I had no active resentment for it, it seemed a long-past act, more of folly than cruelty.

"Helen," said he, "we must go to Leith. Sergius thinks you should be in better quarters than this; he says that your arm is bruised to the bone."

"Guide us!" said the voice of the little Laird, outside. "May I bring mileddy in a sup o' broth? Madam, I didna just ken ye were ill till sin syne. Sir Bourly, dinner waits ye!" He went. "Eh," said he, "'twas Saunder tauld me ye hadna bin oot the day, that he heard him tell the Prince ye were ill-disposed, yet nane cam to me as they should, to ask food for ye. Noo jist tek' this—a' the strength o' gude venison is in it. Guide us frae gluttons, hae ye supped it a'? Weel, aweel, yese noo hae a bit grouse, an a glass of port which I'll e'en fetch ye."

"It is here, sir," said Saunder, who, impassive as ever, stood without in waiting. He passed them in to Stellarig, who brought them to me.

"Oh," said I, "I am thankful to you for this food, though I did not just feel to want it."

"That's so," said he, gratified and withdrawing. "These lilies of the field—princes an' siccan—canna joost think of aebody but their ain sels."

"That's so," said Stuart, coming in laughing. "What is this mysterious and awful eclipse? It is like what one reads in Æsop, of the sick lion. All footprints tend one way—to this cave. Helen, shall we make it up? Dear, are you really ill?"

"Yes," said I, "I have a hurt arm and shoulder, since last night, and it is painful. Stellarig has been humanely feeding me, 'twas that he referred to."

"Never mind Stellarig," said he harshly. "When you drag in a third person in that favourite drawl of yours, *I* know it means war to the knife with me. Get it over, for God's sake! Call me all the devils, from Ashtaroth to Beelzebub, by implication, and then forgive me, with the true magnanimity of the one in fault. That *rôle* I am fixed for, nor can hope to change.

Sometimes, being innocent, 'tis difficult to act up to it, however."

"Say what you have to say, good or bad, sir. To-morrow I start for Leith."

"Not, I hope, in the tragic style of last night! that was indeed a ricochet. Why are you going to Leith—if you are going?"

"To get a surgeon for my arm—it is bruised to the bone, Sir Burleigh says."

"It is impossible. How can Sir Burleigh tell? You shall not go to Leith so, believe. You are getting too much of a fine lady, Helen; and another thing, Kilmarnock was in here, very busy with his obsequious flattery—no doubt. By——, he shall be Court physician. Let me see this arm. A fairy pinched it, sweet, for the *allégresse* of last night? Dear, I will kiss it well. What, bandaged! Oh, here is Sir Burleigh. Sir, as Stellarig was here, and others, I ventured on a visit of condolence to this invalid."

"Helen will be glad to see you, sir."

"Yes; but I am sorry to learn that her arm is hurt. May I ask by what accident these rough hills have proved so untender?"

Though his words were smooth and calm, his tone was imperative.

"They are slippery," said I, "with the snow."

"And did you slip on the snow, Lady Clifford?"

"No, sir; but the hurt is nothing."

"I will to know," said he, half jestingly, "what precipice the Pentlands hide, that I may avoid it? Sir Burleigh will tell me. Sir, on your allegiance," half laughing.

"No," I besought, trembling.

"Here, then," said Sir Burleigh irritably, "is the mystery. I thought fit to correct my wife, sir, for disobeying me"—he flung the broken riding-switch at Stuart's feet—"since 'tis your will to know."

"My God! you cannot mean you struck her? 'Tis impossible, you are jesting."

He rose and faced him, the dawn of a smile on his lips, his eyes incredulous, yet anxious, ready to laugh at the assurance that this was a piece of pleasantry, an acting of tyranny so grotesque as to be even a heavy jest.

Sir Burleigh's eyes wandered in a bewildered way to me. I would gladly have vindicated him, asserted that 'twas an invention, but could think of no words; languor and weakness held me a spectator of these two faces—as in a crowded theatre we watch those of actors, oblivious of our own discomfort.

"'Twas a jest," I began, tremblingly, seeing

Stuart's face whiten, his eyes dilate, as the strange silence held us all; but my voice was drowned, Sir Burleigh was speaking.

"It is no jest," said he harshly. "I wish to God it were!"

"Then you struck her?" said Stuart, his eyes blazing like two fierce stars, "to her hurt? Lady Clifford I take humble leave for the present. Will you attend me, sir, to my tent?"

He went out so possessed by fury as to be calm. Sir Burleigh was following like a lamb to the slaughter, dumbly.

"Don't go," said I, stretching out my hand. "He is for quarrelling. Let it pass, sir. Am I nothing in all this, that you go at his word, and I beseech you to stay in vain? Why did you tell him? Is it not enough to beat me like a slave, that you must publish it everywhere? A few hours and his anger will be over, as you know."

"His anger is nothing to me," said Sir Burleigh, between his teeth. "Were he other than he who is, by ——! I would call him out for his insolence. This shall end it."

"'Twill but rivet it," I moan voicelessly, turning away, as Sir Burleigh, shaking off my detaining hand, goes—returning presently, gloomy and downcast.

"He was off up the hills," said he, "with Appin. Could not trust himself to speak."

"Better so," said I. "Why should I be further afflicted? I tell you, 'twould be less to me that you pieced the whip and struck me again, than talked of it. Why will you? Cannot it die out in silence, as it should from the first? Will you help me to rise, sir?"

Slowly and sadly, having bathed my face, and muffled the plaid closely over my head, I went out leaning on Sir Burleigh's arm—stifling down the moans pain, and the stiffness of my arms, brought to my lips.

Coming from the obscurity of the cave—the fresh, dazzling, snowy hills, the clear atmosphere, the lightness and brightness of all around, revived me.

Sir Burleigh was very good and tender, but a strangeness seemed to have crept between us. Before I had felt that, let all the world unite against me, he was my shield and buckler. He would love, justify, defend. Now he was far off in spirit—gloomy and inaccessible as the frowning hills in the distance. I had no spirit left to amuse him with, any happy audacity—cowering along beside him, silent and lonely as himself.

Even when, from habit, his heavy arm stole round my shoulders, resting on them, its sudden

withdrawal pained me more than the dull pressure on the aching, bruised flesh, recalling to both the cause of our present unhappiness.

The philosopher who uttered the truism that "No outward tyranny can touch the mind," thought I, had better suffer a few bruises, or so inflict them on his dearest friend that they are a thousandfold more painful than himself bearing them.

Presently, being weary, I sat down on a flat rock, and he stood silently beside me, both gazing on the vast theatre of the hills around us.

"How little our lives are?" said I, presently, "to be so crammed with pain and disquiet!"

"Has yours been so?" said he, seating himself beside me, and tenderly drawing my head to a rest on his shoulder.

"No," said I, "not until now. I want the real Sir Burleigh back again, and the wife-beater banished."

"Banish him then, Nell," said he softly, but with significance, and himself drawing the plaid over my face, which burnt with a sudden and fiery blush. "Helen, here, where is voiceless solitude and loneliness, surely I may now speak of my wrongs, of my patience. To you who heard the order given, as to a vassal, to attend and explain my cruelty (which, God

knows! I do not defend nor excuse), it may seem I have but earned a right to such treatment; but, my darling, because I could not break your heart, because I rather elected to trample my honour in the dust than to see you pine and perish—whom I love better than honour—because I gave you time and scope for this hallucination of your youth to fade and die out of your life, is it for you to go on to the end, carelessly, thoughtlessly, from custom more than real affection, flying round this inconstant flame, moth-like? You say you love me—I know you do—will you not now come to me for ever? 'Twill be to him but a passing and trivial pain, and the fret and fever of my life will be over. Let me be happy now. You have but to give me your word, and through any appearance, through any assertion of another's, I will believe you to be, as by your nature you can only be, true as steel. But," he added sternly, "I want no false or frightened assurance. If, standing in this furnace, a lie could pluck me forth, I would reject it."

I looked up at him—anguish and intensest suffering were in his face. I thought of the day at the Manor, long since, when in utter woe, in misery unparalleled, he had taken me to his heart; how he had striven—hoping against hope

—by love, by patience, by endurance to win me, and his face assumed a nobility in my sight that no other had—"a just man," who suffered no world's verdict to force him to severity, no self-consciousness of merit to arm him to judgment.

The snowy waste was around us—emblem of what his life had been, whilst I had revelled in flowers. The hills, steadfast as his love, looked down on us; beside it, Stuart's showed like a quicksand, swallowing up life, honour, happiness; insatiate, unstable; smiling graciously to tempt straying footsteps, but undermined ever by a restless sea of varying passion, excitement, ambition, and novelty; wearing out the life fate had tangled with his; tyrannous, exacting, lovable, yet wanting. "He will have a crown, a Court," thought I; "troops of devoted friends. To a man so placed love is but a sentiment, to be breathed in Italian songs—to me—to another—to a third; to Sir Burleigh it means reward for illimitable devotion."

"I will," said I, drawing down his face with my stiff arms; "Sir Burleigh, believe me now, for ever, true as steel; but—but I cannot be harsh, nor cease to love him."

"Oh, my dear," said he, "be what you will, I trust you now, my own for ever. Helen, you

will never know what I suffered. We are an honourable race ; to gain you, your love, freely given as now, I have passed through torments unimaginable. 'She will come to me,' I have said, 'this fair and true spirit, but only in God's good time.' And, Nell, I durst as soon snatch at an angel wandering past, as at your love. No submission, no obedience, no duty rendered wife-like, could content me, more than could an image or eidolon of you. Now—now I have you, I am repaid, thankful, happy unutterably. Now, my sweet rose, I shall take you to Leith to-morrow, if you feel well enough ; come in now, and rest. Nell, you are so innately true that this resolve, which lifts a mountain from me, has already wrought a change in you, You look brighter, better, more like a proud Clifford. Come, my darling, we must not be out too long."

Many times on the way, seeing some upright boulder amid the distant passes of the hills, would I start, thinking it to be Stuart watching us, though he could divine nothing of this revolution. And when, at length, reaching the cavern, Sir Burleigh went to announce our departure for Leith on the morrow, to obtain leave for it, I wearily closed mine eyes, dismissing thought of the possible quarrel, and slept, dreaming of past days at the Manor.

Sir Burleigh came in late. He looked stern, yet anxious and troubled.

"My dear," said he, kneeling beside the bed, answering the mute question of my eyes, "I have leave granted, we start to-morrow. Helen, we began well; but, my dear, there was a terrible scene after, and words used that, but that the lad was beside himself, could not be pardoned—from him to me. I was nigh drawing my sword on him. Thank God I stopped short of that treason!"

* * * * * *

The next day we started for Leith. Stuart came for a formal farewell. Haughty, and cold as ice, he scarce glanced at me. To see us, none would guess at the scene of last night as related by Sir Burleigh. 'Twas of the last importance that all should seem united, to the chiefs, who, though apparently apathetic, were quick to note any division, and to sound the note of alarm of jarring councils to the neighbour clans. Sergius did not come to Leith—he, too, was cold and distant. Saunder and two runners came, carrying a tent for us and provisions for the party, as 'twas a two days' journey, and we went like exiles, humbly and silently.

The cold and pure air of the hills had endued

us with so great a stock of health, that once started we found it no hard task to walk, staying for more rests, however, than the runners approved.

On arriving at Leith, we were hospitably received by Stellarig, who had our rooms swept and garnished ready for us. The gloomy garden closed us round, and the silent portraits companioned me—for day after day Sir Burleigh went a-fishing with the smacks, or into Edinbro'. My arms and shoulders speedily cured themselves in sea-water baths, and I sat knitting in the common room about a week after our return, while Sir Burleigh and Stellarig played backgammon, when we were surprised by the entrance of Saunder, ushering in a strange gentleman, who, though not habited as such, had a priest-like look. Giving the usual introductory phrase, current amongst the Jacobite leaders, and saying he judged it safest on all counts not to delay his errand, he begged a private audience of Sir Burleigh.

It was not long, and, departing, Sir Burleigh re-entered in evident excitement; yet went on with the backgammon till the evening's end, and wished Stellarig good-night as usual.

"Helen," said he, as we gained our rooms, "that was the Abbé Dupont, our King's French

Secretary, just come from France on a special mission."

"To whom?" said I, thinking how a French man would like a journey to the Highlands.

"To me," said he. "Our King, God bless him! is ever mindful of faithful service. Helen, he has created me Duke. Sergius, at others' instance, advised it, for services, loyalty, and devotion. 'To me and my heirs for ever,' eh, Helen, thus it runs. Duke of Denzillac. 'Tis an old family honour, to be revived in my favour after three centuries. Denzil, you remember Denzil's farm, that is but part of the original name. Nell, we must not let it go to Verney's son, eh?"

"Sir," said I, somewhat austerely, yet blushing, "do not forget that, gracious as the King is in its bestowal, he is yet but *de jure*."

"'Tis but an affair of months," said he impatiently. "I am far more secure of it than had Hanover been the granter. Duke of Denzillac. Madam, I salute your Grace."

I could muster but scant congratulations for this, which momently increased in value to him, nor scarce understand how, till they had more solid assurance of the country, they could give away its titles; but that was but my ignorance, Sir Burleigh affirmed very positively, though he did not explain how, and was angry at the doubt.

Before the week was out, I very heartily hated Denzillac, even the very name.

* * * * * *

The early spring here was cold and wet. Sea-fogs were frequent, and the rough life of the hills was healthier than the comparative imprisonment in which we were.

Another week passed; then came from Kilmarnock the accompanying letter, which at first Sir Burleigh would not show me, ultimately placing it in my hands himself. It ran :—

"DEAR SIR BURLEIGH,

"I am coming on in advance to make some arrangements for the reception of the Abbé Dupont, who is to bring an important communication from Versailles which concerns you.

"But, my dear friend, be not hasty in deciding to accept the gift he will bring you, nor, above all, believe it the spontaneous offer it appears. It was wrested from J. by persistent pressure. Doubtless 'twould in the course of time have been the fitting reward of your loyalty to the cause; but at Versailles it is thought at present premature to send it you, and that you would better appreciate a solemn and public announcement, made when we have, not greater right, but more

apparent justification for thus disposing of seigneuries and honours. S. hath had a pretty stiff rating from J. on the matter, who says in it:—'Thus I gratify you, but at what cost? No grudging an adherent's reward, it is yet monstrous to suppose that if we now begin the distribution of honours, others will wait patiently for their turn, or that conceding their demands in full will not both render it unsafe for them, divert their minds from the race whose prizes are given beforehand, and expose us to the sneers of our allies here, for giving away the bear's skin ere the bear is killed.'

"S. has been ill and is dispirited. 'I have been trying,' says he, 'to please all, and have pleased none, but am myself ruined, broke, good for nothing. Sir Burleigh must have his dukedom, and, having it, he will be content, though my death follow. Yet, 'twas to content him I incurred this reprobation—for toiling for this for months, with every interest I possess, that he has rent my heart from me.'

"Yet in nothing now are you to blame. Censure of the past is, too, useless, nor in my right or province. If I might advise you, humbly ask leave that the bestowal be held over till some more signal instance of your devotion can be given, and then bestowed publicly.

This will gratify J., as falling in with his express views, and instantly raise you to all as a sensible and politic man, who will not advantage by the hot-headed zeal of a too zealous friend and master.

"I desire kind remembrances to her ladyship, from, Sir,

"Your obedient, humble servant,

"KILMARNOCK."

"There is a gracious gift," said Sir Burleigh, stamping on the letter. "I have no friend in Sergius, 'tis clear, and what the poor lad has been working for, to please me, I am to fling in his face. 'Tis not Denzillac. Dukedoms are scarce, and one would set well on Sergius; but by ——! I can do without the d——d dukedom, better than I can afford to be the cause of them harassing and hectoring him with this new grief and all his heavy cares."

"This new grief is old by now," said I, palely, "nor should be revived by your mention. I have been your duchess for a week, and am content to return to milady. You look as well to me as Sir Burleigh, as any duke of any place."

"That is not the question," said he. "I have earned this of them, and the right to a gracious bestowal."

"That is not questioned," said I, "only the ill-chosen time, the hurried manner, the extortion of it beforehand of any others. I am sorry it has chanced so, but Sergius is right."

"You were best not repeat that," said he angrily. "The extent of my sacrifices is not known to you, and you sit there and calmly prate of the loss of my life's prize—as though any man would bear to see all he has built on for a lifetime swept away, and listen to be told it serves him but right, by his wife, or——, for by——! both names fit you."

He went out of the room in a towering rage, leaving me this kind speech to digest as I might, and Sergius' letter on the floor, a little torn. I think he went to Edinbro', where was a lot of half-avowed Jacobites—for people were getting bolder now on that side, having the highest hopes of its success.

When he returned he was calmer. Someone had assured him that James was mostly petulant or ungracious, if acting at others' instigation, wishing to gain credit to himself alone for every promotion, but that that would quickly wear off.

"So, my sweet Duchess," said he——

"That, sir, was not your name for me this morning."

"Nell, I am very sorry. Dear, you should not

have crossed me about this, for I am but a man after all."

"Oh!" said I. "I thought you were an archangel."

Sir Burleigh became gloomy and downcast; he made a hundred apologies at different times, to which I would not listen, but knitted tranquilly as a duchess should when a duke has called her names, and looked from the window at the spring rain pattering down; while he read the *Gazette*, glancing at me from time to time to see was he forgiven.

In the evening, Sir Burleigh and Stellarig again went to Edinburgh. I had ceased to think of danger as associated with these visits, and sitting by firelight was reading a "Treatise on Fishing." Turning to the title-page, I saw "Boyd" writ on it. 'Twas some book Lady Kilmarnock had left here. Saunder came up presently to announce his master, and ask would I see him. Then Sergius himself, who, after greeting, spied the letter on the floor, and recognising it as his own, picked it up.

"What!" said he. "Good counsel flung away. Where is Sir Burleigh? In Edinbro'! Helen, you should be there too."

"He has but gone for the evening."

"Yes, that I know; but you must find some

convenient abode in Edinbro'. You cannot stay here."

I looked at him, half frightened.

"Oh!" said he, "'tis a pleasure for me to disquiet you; to turn you out like a little wanderer and vagabond; but surely Sir Burleigh knows that he is returning, and does not design you to meet again—now?"

"He may be about that now," said I, shivering, "and if not, we will go in the morning—a duke and a duchess," I added bitterly—"and find out some obscure wynd or other in the old town, where our friends cannot venture. Or I will to France. I hate my life!" I added passionately; "even you scorn me, and all look upon me as the root of every evil chance that befalls our company. Even now I was happy alone, with this book of Lord Boyd's."

"What?" said he, in astonishment.

"This 'Treatise on Fishing.' Was the owner here, he would be kind and pitying to a weary, perplexed wretch. He would tell me of these flies and rods, and be as a strain of music in all this discord."

He laughed. "I am the owner," said he. "That was mine when Lord Boyd. Which fly will your ladyship first learn of?" He drew his chair closer, and took the book.

"You are no longer Lord Boyd," said I, "your claim to it has lapsed. But this is nonsense. What you say is reasonable. Was I away in France, Sir Burleigh would disquiet no one here, and there I will go."

"God knows what would be best to do," said he. "This new quarrel between them is like the breaking-up of Neva's ice—there is no safe walking, and to steer a clear way amongst it is next to impossible. But that you know me to be your true friend and well-wisher, to be cognizant of the whole past, I could not ask present leave to advise you, or, gaining it, venture on such counsel as may be painful, yet is necessary."

"I will thankfully receive aid or counsel from you," said I anxiously, "and that you should know, without further leave asked. I will believe, as I surely may, that it is not your will to inflict pain unnecessarily. Yet why, having no right, should you be drawn into the chaos of our affairs? It is claiming too much of friendship to distress it with our distresses. What is this new quarrel, milord? Do not tell it in part; 'tis, I feel sure, of this dukedom, of which I had not the most distant hint given me, either by Casimir or Sir Burleigh. Tell me your thought of it, your whole mind, if you will, regarding it, for my own guidance. To me it seems an empty

honour—Sir Burleigh has bartered gold for tinsel."

"'Tis for your guidance I interfere," said he. "Sir Burleigh's aims and their gratification have no interest for me, nor would have but little for others, were you not here."

"Pray, milord," said I, blushing angrily, "leave me out. I have told you I knew nothing of it, cared nothing for it. Were things settled, and it contented Sir Burleigh to be created Duke, 'twould please me that he should be content. Now, rightly or wrongly, it seems, as your letter there says, a premature bestowal of half-earned honours, more like to dissatisfy others than to inspirit them."

"That is so," said he; "but, Helen, I must speak plainly—assure me of forgiveness, or I cannot at all."

"Oh," said I, carelessly, though I felt alarmed, "I have already told you that from you no plain speaking can come amiss. What is this quarrel you refer to? I had not heard of it. Was it about this dukedom?"

"No," said he, in so low a tone that I leaned forward, fixing my eyes on his face, which was half turned from me. "Helen, I must tell you the whole truth. 'Twas of the price of it—not of aid, of services, of money, of loyalty—or many

others might claim dukedoms equally with Sir Burleigh. 'Twas of you."

The firelight played on the gleaming silken robe I wore. At these last words I felt that to be robed in flame were more endurable than to listen further. I hoped that Sergius would relent—but faintly, as a criminal might hope a judge would forget to sentence. I might have commanded his silence, yet was assured he would not speak without anxious thought, full reflection, and a conviction of its necessity. To stifle back these words he had judged it expedient to speak, were to show I had but little confidence in his friendship, his generosity, his proven truth to me—to put aside a healing draught for its bitterness.

"God knows," said he, answering my thought, "how anxiously I have debated this step, yet am impelled to it. Helen, you must listen, cruelly as it may wring your heart. To me it is equal pain to speak, as I must, to you of both."

"Not of Sir Burleigh," said I. "You, who know the whole, dare not reflect on his goodness, his forbearance."

"I dare so," said he; "and if you are not a slave, a willing victim of an infamous barter, you must reflect on it too. The scene last in-

dulged in brings you nearer than you imagine to your simile of gold for tinsel. I will no longer see you stifle and die to every good in life, as a victim to these two. You must listen to me. It is true I love you, but because of that I have a horror of this infamy, a determination not to see you wronged and degraded. For a while I stood by amazed, perplexed, pitying all as victims of some irrevocable decree of fate. Then I awoke. Some devilish enginery was at work, silently, subtilely, mining the ground you trod on, poisoning the air you breathed. I watched, waited, resolved on your escape from this thraldom, to which an innocent error in the past had led you—as a child wandering after a marsh-fire is at last in danger of being engulfed. Such was Stuart's love for you, an *ignis fatuus*, ever delusively tempting your dazzled eyes, your unknowing steps, to danger. This last is a quicksand from which you must turn at once, or be engulfed for ever. I come now to proof—beyond a certain point I swore they should not go. It is reached in this brutality to you, revealing how much real forbearance was in Sir Burleigh's mind in this shameless contention between disappointed ambition, on the one hand, and selfish love on the other. I have the key of this Bluebeard's closet, and thus I

warn you from a threatened fate. Begin where I point—whose writing ?"

It was Sir Burleigh's.

"If I cannot," it said, "chain this wandering spirit of yours to a more perfect obedience to you, is it my fault, or whose ? I have done what I could, consistent with my part. Was I to show the chains and gyves 'twould break her heart."

In another passage said he—"Helen is very well and contented. About Leith I am doubtful, since 'tis apparent I could well come on strict business alone; yet, if possible, will induce her to accompany me."

"That proves nothing of your assertion of me," said I, with that miserable inflection of voice which meets a half-anticipated sentence with a faint and doubtful interrogation. "Surely you are dreaming ! Aid, loyalty, devotion—all the dear losses endured in this wretched cause—the Manor, the lavished wealth, might answer even for so substantial a reward. Sergius, if such is the tenour of your disclosure, take it elsewhere. Milord, tell me what you mean—let me know the utmost of my wretchedness, you cannot pause now. There is no worse word than utmost infamy, and that I must have reached—since you dare tell me I have been barter for this honour."

For awhile Kilmarnock did not speak, an anxious and haggard look was on his face. Then a clear and stern fixedness came to it.

"Helen," said he, "rather than that you should be passed through this fire to Moloch, I have resolved that you should learn in whom you can trust—putting aside the misery to myself, the pain to you. Misery I have endured on your account long enough, without benefit to you. But for you there had been no dukedom even dreamt of for Sir Burleigh, and that is surmised at Versailles—nay, more than surmised, is openly asserted. Then," said he, "though I have proof upon proof, come to this last bit of robber *camaraderie* ":—

"You have not, sir, as yet, got me assurance of this dukedom. Methinks I have paid dear enough for it. Sergius' frequent visits to the King might be used to my advantage. Nor will I wait till the general scramble, as you will then have less in deliberate bestowal than as now. I have been patient enough, and shall deserve to be made Court fool if I further defer it. Your constancy is not such as will warrant assumption of certainty; and after loss of the Manor to further your plans, I will make no further losses, and this last visit of S. to the King, your father, must decide it. In any case I shall still

hold to the cause loyally—but my loyalty will be as that of so many others, general and not special, nor involving further sacrifices. I will appeal to Helen, who loves me enough for my goodness to her to respond. I will, if it be necessary, tell her all you have offered."

"This is not Sir Burleigh," say I, trembling, putting back the letters, refusing to believe in them.

"Ask yourself, then," said he, "are they not borne out by acts? Was any strong appeal ever made to you by him till this last, when, furious at the non-arrival of Dupont, and disbelieving in any unwrit bond, he reclaimed you?—as an irritated fisher drags in a bait when disappointed, yet holds it ready for another cast, should his mood change. Helen, you are the pretty gilded bait for this dukedom. Hitherto you have been unrivalled; but, once launched into the gaieties of a Court or its intrigues, how could he be sure of your freedom from rivalry? I do not say he has no affection for you. Granted he designed to save you pain—he admired you, was used to have you near him. Probably he would not have married any mere rose-cheeked country girl in the like circumstances—as her folly had been too glaring, her influence too transient, to render the risk worth while; but you, in whose

ability, policy, and beauty he had three strongest ties on Stuart's constancy, he secured, with a devilish policy worthy of Machiavel himself. Had his main object been your happiness he would have steadfastly denied you even to think of Stuart—have won your love to himself—have sent you away while these long and unnecessary visits to the Manor were made. Helen, my darling, the sight of your bruised arm, of your brutal treatment, resolved me. I have held silence but too long—for, proofless, I could do nothing, and positive proof was well-nigh impossible. This robbers' quarrel unlocked to me the whole mystery of this iniquity. That Stuart was impelled to it by passion I am sure; but what of Sir Burleigh? Will you tell me that a mere momentary compassion for a weeping girl—even you—would drive a man of his stern and heavy mental power so completely from his course as to induce this dramatic marriage with you? Had he not seen Casimir violently in love with you; become possessed of your claim on him in saving his life; known that to let him take you away would break the spell, so far as the Manor was concerned; and deliberately planned that he could afford a wife whose beauty, intelligence, and proved affection for himself would render her an

irresistible instrument in gaining this unheard-of advancement—this I have thought throughout. But your faith in Sir Burleigh's love for you, your idolatrous reverence for supposed pity and goodness to you, would have justified anyone in leaving undisturbed this sheet-anchor to which you clung with such touching faith. My dear, how else can I put it? Casimir was driven to this exertion of interest—not against his good will, but against his better judgment; against my advice, against his own best interests; to the anger of his father, the alienation and wrath of others who have prior claims unsettled and in abeyance, yet who had been before content to wait. Driven, I say, advisedly. For Sir Burleigh was callous as stone to his entreaties to him to wait, being resolved on this; while—while—what constancy Stuart has is yours. That I am assured of this you cannot doubt. The wretched scene when they last parted is but the finality of a series of quarrels, all on the same theme. I have it, indeed, set down by Sir Burleigh. You shall see for yourself, that what loyalty alone would signally have failed to win, what heavy sacrifices of wealth could not attain, he has obtained. How, is not far to seek. Indeed, for candour, these slave-dealers surpass each other."

"And are only surpassed by you," say I, beginning to disbelieve, listening as to some chronicle of past times—yet, again, as by a returning wave of evidence, believing.

With a sinking heart, I urged that letters might prove but the mood of a moment, be writ in haste, in anger ; that Sir Burleigh should be held blameless—all dishonour, obloquy, rest on me.

"Not so," said Sergius. "I tell you again, that had you been present at this last scene between them, you could not acquit or forgive him. 'Twas the night before you left for Leith. I had been busy in Stuart's abode, reading various letters to him and discussing replies. His attention was wavering and inconstant, his manner agitated. Sir Burleigh came in, haughty, sullen, and resolved.

"'Sir,' said he, 'you commanded my attendance.'

" Stuart blazed into instant, uncontrolled passion. 'Yes,' he replied, flinging down some letters he held. ''Twas to ask how, in my presence almost, so cruel a degradation was inflicted on Helen Rohan, whom, as you know, I would protect with my life.'

"' You mean my wife?' inquired Sir Burleigh. 'Sir, I claim exemption from your commands on

that score. I corrected her, it is true, and, as I now own, with too great harshness. But, sir, that is my affair, and concerns neither you nor Sergius.'

"'Sergius it may not,' said he; 'but Helen saved my life, nor will I quietly stand by and see her cruelly treated. Nor will I,' he continued in a towering fury, 'further argue of it. Her claim on my regard, friendship, is inalienable, and that you know.'

"'That you assert it, I know; further knowledge—— Nay, since you have brought Sergius into this, we will, once for all, resolve what claim Helen Rohan—having, as you assert, saved your life—can give you on my wife, Dame Clifford?'

"For awhile he made no answer, struggling with a tempest of wrath. Then, signing to me to go, stammered, ere I gained the door:

"'Yours! yes, yours in name, mine in fact. Oh, my God! that to shield her I have allowed this iniquitous claim of yours to stand. You—you, who knew what she was to me. Why did you snatch her—she who was in fact my wife—from me?'

"'This,' said Sir Burleigh, 'is old ground. You, who charge me with cruelty, reflect. Was it not to save her, who came to me ruined, heart-broken, dying almost, that I opened the doors of

the Hall to her—doors never before opened but to good women. Could you but have seen her in her despair! We will leave talking. But you, sir, who dare charge me with cruelty—what of yours, who robbed her of youth, of honour, and would now take from her my name, my protection?'

"'I will so,' said Stuart. 'Pretty protection, to strike her! My God! am I to be everyway ground into the dust, powerless, the very mock of fate; the woman I love the legal bond-slave of another; the girl who saved my life—who stood between me and a bloodhound like Blount, a villain like Verney Clifford—beaten, degraded, and I to keep silence, to cry content, when but for your snatching her from me I would acknowledge her before all the world as my wife?'

"On this his rage broke into hysterical sobs, anger had reached its utmost limit, and" (said Sergius, half scornfully) "there is something of the woman in Stuart.

"Sir Burleigh hesitated, his own anger ebbing. Stuart, as you know, is his idol. Grant him that grace in it all, he cannot bear to distress him. He was moved, relented, softened, caring little for you, distressed for him, willing to have peace.

"'Come,' said he, after a while, to this white

Obi. 'Come, my dear lad, Helen is not hurt, she has forgiven me, though I will confess I did not deserve it. I will grant you right about it, Casimir. I was d——d cruel. I am sorry enough, was sorrow any good. Do not you condemn me too hardly,' and so on. He actually, in effect, apologised to Stuart, who condescended, after a while, to a sullen sort of truce. You know his way—but for witnessing it all 'twere unbelievable. They have made it up, these two Turcomans, with the *sang froid* of slave-dealers. Sir Burleigh brought you away to Leith, 'tis true, but only in anger at the non-arrival of Dupont. Now, Helen, I have told you the whole. Can you exist—breathe in a dignity so bought as Denzillac? Would you not rather elect to be free?"

"Where could I go?" said I, drearily. "Sergius, I have no passion of hate for sin. If you wonder at my calm, do not misjudge me. I cannot hate Sir Burleigh; at the moment he rescued me was stamped on my heart a gratitude which is ineffaceable, which no wrongdoing of his will kill. Oh, what have I done—I—that you, whom I thought my friend, turn thus against me, to prove me the vile instrument of a vile barter? I have tried to be less wicked than I seem. To you, who speak to me as to one versed in every corruption, in every vice, I may, indeed, seem

worth no more tender treatment. You unlock hell and show me demons at work, as though such iniquity were common contemplation to me. Indifferently, pitilessly, I will go to it; there is no one cares for my soul. How, when husband, lover, friend are cruel and pitiless devils, can I escape?"

"Would you join with them," said he, "nor, granted the warning of such sight, escape to any obscurity, to any hiding-place?"

"Oh," said I, "milord, help me to go; I am not, indeed, so base as you picture, I—I did not guess at this. Yet should I not let Sir Burleigh, if he can so, explain it? My God! could I only hope 'twas a misconstruction of yours—only go back to the happiness of material stripes—to have Sir Burleigh as he was."

"That you can never," said he, "in your meaning of it; you will truly have him as he always has been—proud, subtle, ambitious."

"Oh," said I, covering my face in agony, "Sergius, have mercy, unsay some of this; tell me you were angry, desirous to inflict pain, that it is but a theory fitted to stray facts; say some less wretchedness is mine, who have had so much, who have suffered enough."

"Dear," said he, "it is my wretchedness to have inflicted this pain, as we should cauterize

a wound in which mortal poison is at work. I am not happy in it, but you, I am determined, shall be no more a victim, unwarned."

"Is not to remain a victim warned worse? Oh! Sergius, why have you turned against me?"

"Because I love you, because I will no longer consent to this nefarious plot, now that I can unveil it, show its authors, which before I could not."

I listened in silence. Every word weighted with shame and misery unutterable to me, I yet could not blame or condemn Kilmarnock for uttering them. To him 'twas as an infamous drama, in which I had been forced into the leading part under false colours; I, who on other counts deserved no pity, to him seemed, on this, to be an object for immeasurable sympathy. My faith in Sir Burleigh's goodness had been so profound that, had earth opened to show me, in place of a home where a strong and loving heart ruled, a place of torment dominated by a fiend, the shock would scarce have been less. Truly, I might deserve it, or even worse, but that could not kill the bitter anguish at finding myself deceived.

"Yet," thought I, striving against conviction, hoping with the tenacity of despair, "may he not be mistaken, and I awake to find myself a

ten thousandfold worse criminal, in that I have dared to sit in judgment, at a bare suggestion of ill-doing, on Sir Burleigh, who has forgiven so much to me? Was all this urged by Kilmarnock the weighty evidence he supposed, or but wrested suspicions?"

"You have but," said he, "to recall what you before knew of Sir Burleigh—his tolerent indifference to you, with this sudden overwhelming haste when Stuart appeared first at the Manor. Helen, the whole is mapped to you. My dear, it is but sorry work for me to unveil this infamy, yet how can I let you wander on in this nether hell, groping for light, which leaves you in blackest darkness?" My darling, Casimir is not to blame—for you were his very life—that he gave this slave-dealer his price. 'Twas not as he had found you Sir Burleigh's wife. To his mind you were his—and after all, the stun, the shock, and the surprise at this masterful move; the inaccessibility in which any rebellion of his had been the signal to place you; the desperate temptation of his love for you, point him out as victim almost equally with yourself. Yet now, now that he has descended to publicly barter for you—for at Versailles, trust me, 'tis not credited that overwhelming love of Sir Burleigh made him so

importunate a suitor for this dukedom—now, you must, you shall, free yourself from both."

"How?" said I. "Oh, milord, am I not in the world's sight worse than they?"

"We are not talking for the world, Helen. My dear, to free you from these fetters I have used a hammer where, had it been but possible, I would have used a down feather. Helen, if it please you to convict Sir Burleigh to himself of this iniquity you may use these means; but in that case I am condemned as a betrayer of my master—a dispatch-box Judas."

"I need no letters, said I, pushing them to him. "Go now, milord. Did any but Saunder see you enter?" Stellarig being away.

"No," said he.

"Go," I implored. "Oh, Sergius, I thought—thought—thought sin—suffering—had been fathomed, but hell is fathomless! Sir Burleigh false! This sea is indeed of fire, and shoreless, and I—I am sinking in it, deep down to destruction."

* * * * * *

I sat dully over the embers of the fire, seeing, flitting to and fro, in thought, like white-winged demons in hell, the letters in which I—I myself—was bought and sold. I, who had given myself away, body and soul, felt that the an-

guish of this last degradation—this sight of Sir Burleigh, urging for payment, clamorous for reward, was more than torture. I do not know how long I sat. Time, that passes for happy people, stopped, lengthening itself out into an eternity. Sir Burleigh came in, wet with a light shower, laughing, content.

"Well, my dear," said he, "am I yet forgiven? Still silent? Helen, that's not so well. Must I purchase pardon on my knees for an inadvertent word? So—will not my sweet rose forgive me now? Many another man angers his wife who yet gets kinder leave to make submission than I am like to get."

"Sir," said I, "let go my hands—how dare you!"

"Dare!"—he rose to his feet in amazement. "Why, what's this coil? Is it not enough for your d——d pride that I kneel for pardon? Helen, you have been dreaming, dear, you are but half awake. Your eyes are wide open. What do you see?—what vision troubles you?"

"A vision of sin, of shame, of misery, of infamy! I see this dukedom impelling you to——"

"Helen, stop!—you are mad!"

"I am," said I desperately, "to have felt gratitude, love, devotion, to you."

"Madam, what do you mean? Silent? By —— you shall answer me now, if I shake the words from your lips. No, I will not strike you again. Devil, you tempt me to kill you, as you have before done."

"'Twere better you had killed me, that in my grave I could have believed in one friend."

"What is it now?" said he gently. "My dear, you are beside yourself, and I will not contend with you; come and tell me the grievance. Is it I?—what have I done? Do not look at me thus. Let it be as black or bitter as it may—whisper it to me. I will try to expiate it, to get pardon. Come, sweet, tell me what it is? Helen, what do you mean?"

I had passed into the next room, and, slamming to the door, locked it, violently wroth at this relenting—which to me seemed the very mockery of hell.

"Open the door!" said he, in as violent anger. "Open, madam, at once, or I will break it down!"

"That you may," said I, between my teeth, "and kill me after; but I will not open—I hate you!"

The dark night beyond showed through an open casement indistinct shadows of tree-tops, waving in the strong sea wind. I leant from it,

heat-drops pouring from my face, the cold wind chilling me; the sound of the sea rolling in on the shingly beach, as it had for thousands of years before, and would when the evil spirits pent in this dark old house had passed to their account. Meantime a mighty leverage was at work on the door, and presently, unknowing how he had accomplished it, 'twas opened by Sir Burleigh, who marched in with the rush of a conqueror, pausing as he did not see me, for I had moved aside from the open window, and the breeze blew stiffly into his face.

"By —— she's gone!" said he. "Helen!"

Without reply I resumed my place, tears falling fast at the submissive humbleness of his tone.

"Helen," coming a step nearer, "what have I done to be treated thus?"

"Sold me," sobbed I, "to Casimir—for this—dukedom!"

"'Tis an infernal lie!" said he. "So that's the thorn? Come and tell me, sweet, how such a bargain arranges itself," and, taking me perforce into his arms, he laughed. Then, as I still sobbed, grew grave.

I could not tell him of the letters, lest it should involve Sergius, but said I had indirectly heard of them, and challenged him to produce them.

"That I will," said he cheerfully, "and if I find the secret of such exchange will pile up dignities by the barter of every damosel on the Manor. Why, you witch, you will next find me out to be an ogre; that is, a giant with long teeth and claws, a raw head, and bloody bones. Nell, I had not deserved this of you. Well, never mind, don't weep your yourself into a Niobe—tell me you are sorry."

So wrath and pain ebbed away as the distant sea, and all grievances grew light with the removal of this crowning blackness—in revival of faith in Sir Burleigh.

"'Tis a heinous charge," said he presently. "I warn you—was I to believe it unprompted, I could not forgive you. What nameless devil entered your heart to cause you credit it? What, in all my life, have I ever done to deserve this from you?"

"Nothing." I knelt at his feet in an agony of repentant tears. "Forgive me, or I shall die. Now, now—you who have been so good to me. I am a wretch, unworthy to live!"

"'Twas the stroke of an assassin," said he, willing to prolong my torment of remorse.

"Forgive me, kill me! My God! take this sin from me. I was mad—mad! I thought it to be so, and it burnt my heart out."

"And was I not more robust," said he sternly, "than to care for the repeating of a slander—not new to me—it might have burnt out mine, for all your care or faith."

"Do not say so! Ah, it is too cruel! Never see me again, yet forgive me! I love you, or should not so have felt it. Let me be forgiven; I will then leave you, that sight of so wicked a wretch may not anger you."

"Helen," said he abruptly, "are you willing to leave me now—now that you can credit this of me?"

"I do not credit it. Send me away if you will, 'twill be but to die. I cannot live apart from you nor will not."

He raised me to his arms, forgave, and comforted me, for my distress was very great that I had hurt him. What did I care for letters which were doubtless lies, forgeries, or wrenched from their true meaning? I cared the more for the truth in his stern, half-angered glance, melting now into pity and forgiveness—cared more for his assurance that he would think no more of it, that I was but the dearer to him for this repentance of an unmeant wrong.

"'Tis whispered in the carrion Court of France," said he, scornfully, "and was sure soon or late to meet your ear; think of it no more, my

darling. Denzillac was talked of in my father's time, in the '15 ; judge, then, how new it is. I have old letters of his which refer to it. You shall see them."

"No," said I, in an awed and shamed whisper. "Your father, sir, would rise in his grave, should so wicked a wretch as I touch his letters."

"He is more like to rise in his grave to look at you, my dear, for he was not immaculate. None of the '15 men were."

"How of the '45 ?"

"Oh ! we are all saints beside them."

"Except me, who am an angel."

"Sweet, I must kiss you for that, though 'tis not sooth."

Sergius looked very grave when, coming next day, he found how lightly his discovery of domestic treason had been held. I was glad beyond measure that it had been disclaimed, and hovered near Sir Burleigh, lest the conscientiousness of Kilmarnock should induce him to betray that he had been my informant; but he was obliging enough, though condemning my weakness in forgiving, not to reopen the matter in any way, nor to lay stress on the zeal with which the dukedom had been sought for Sir Burleigh by Stuart, when discussing it.

"I will not decline its present bestowal," said

Sir Burleigh, "why should I? It is in my own opinion, and that of those who know how many sacrifices I have made to the cause—though a fully adequate—yet in nowise an extravagant or preposterous reward. I have not specially sought it" (a slight sneer came to Sergius' lips at this, which I noted with a sinking heart) —"the lad's zeal in seeking it for me speaks well for him, as grateful for services rendered, and should justly heighten him to all true adherents."

"Sir," said Kilmarnock, "that I will not discuss; too much zeal is dangerous oftentimes, as arguing less of justice than favouritism. I do not say it is universally the case, but we have very strait and severe critics at Louis' Court, who will to see, not the coat only, but the lining, and naturally wish the ermine of a duke to be spotless, neither stained with self-seeking nor sullied by any suspicion of favour, but given as the just right of its recipient, after full and careful council."

"Then," said Sir Burleigh, grimly, "do you advance any suspicion of the Clifford honour, the Clifford help?"

"No," said he, sullenly, "I but contend that the King is right in wishing it delayed, that all may be so satisfied."

"If," said Sir Burleigh stiffly, "both bestower and recipient are satisfied, the satisfaction of others is to little purpose. Some new wonder will occur to divert cavillers. Brief, I will not act a part in it, nor disguise that it is with the greatest gratitude and satisfaction I have received and hold it. You will like to be Duchess, Nell?"

"Yes," said I, indifferently, being more intent on a thousand conjectures about Sergius and his thoughts, than on an ecstatic vision of coronets and strawberry-leaves.

Finding so little sympathy with his Elysian dreams, with his realised ambitions, Sir Burleigh went out to walk on the links, and I sat down with a guilty consciousness of wishing Kilmarnock away, that by lapse of time the inconsistency of my forgiving Sir Burleigh at a word, with the real grief and shame of which he had been witness, might bear a less black aspect to him. I neither knew what to do nor where to look away from his angry, sombre glance; but humbly waited for scorn and reproach, as one well deserving both. He would not for a time speak. Silence settled so down on us that the beating of my heart seemed to me to be audible —it could not have been so, but my strained hearing invested it with a loud ominous sound.

Involuntarily I pressed my hands on my heart to still it, bowing my head, tears stealing into my eyes, at this stern reproachful silence, this mute condemnation. What a wretch must I seem to him, a greedy sharer of this dear-bought dignity —a woman who let emotion rule one while for good, another for ill—hating fiercely at night a bitter wrong, which next day was condoned, as 'twould seem to him.

"Lady Clifford," said he, at length, "I am bound for Edinbro'; can I there serve you in anywise?"

"No," said I miserably, "unless, milord, you can buy a pardon, an indulgence, such as Rome sells. Sergius, you will forgive me before you go. I am very, very miserable."

"Do not," said he, "make me so. Helen, 'tis natural you should snatch at present ease. Forget my intervention—I thought you stronger—and better," he added bitterly, unable to restrain his reproaches; "one whose whole soul would revolt at baseness, or I had not spoken. Let me be a suppliant for pardon, for indulgence, and that granted me, will revert to this no more for ever."

"I forgave him," I murmured, "I could not help it. Sergius, forgive me; it is torture to me to doubt Sir Burleigh. Nor I cannot condemn

him, even justly. When you spoke I hated, and from my soul loathed this wretched dukedom. Sir Burleigh I cannot hate, nor lose faith in. Do not you, milord be angry; you have cause, yet let me be forgiven. You do not know what it is to love even an unworthy object, or you could not scorn me so for this want of justice—of firmness."

"I do not scorn you," said he, gloomily. "Believe that I meant you a service—offered you what in the like betrayal I should myself have wished."

"You would not," I interrupted. "Once stretched on the rack for truth's sake, even falsehood were gladly welcomed to pluck you thence. You speak unknowing its agony. To look on, to speculate, is not to endure. I could not go through again the mental torture of last night. Your wisdom, your kindness, are for better people; but, Sergius, your goodness is ever present to me. Have patience with me. Was I stronger, nobler, you would not have spoken in vain. I am but a weak, worthless object—yet be my friend still."

"That I can never cease to be," said he, yet so coldly that pride froze the appealing tears in mine eyes, made mute the gratitude I felt at his pardon. I took his offered hand at

parting, resolved, though owning myself to be but rightly served, to see him no more—shrinking from so just a scorn.

I went out into the damp garden. Light airs were blowing in seaward, little spikes of green bulbs pushing upward from the sheltered spots; the buds of the trees reddening in the sunshine, birds beginning to think of their summer nests. All was glad and joyous—the sound of the sea, the call of the fisherwomen to their bairns. I felt guiltily glad that I had at once acquitted Sir Burleigh without too strait a trial. I did not want to prove him guilty. Sergius was doubtless right, and would sternly have piled proof upon proof, have drawn the sword and executed justice on this ogre. Yet to what end? I could not spare him. He might be guilty, yet, if so, it had grown upon him. His first act in the evil had been one of mercy to me—spontaneous, illimitable in its goodness. Then, if he had gradually let this ambition steal upon him, was he the first Samson who had been betrayed by passion?—his passion being ambition. How could he help himself? Who was I, to set up in judgment?—besides, I did not half believe it, for he loved me. "Besides," said I, with a shrug, pulling up a little pale cyclamen, whose tufted blossoms adorned the root of a grim old

tree, "things can be made to bear any aspect, spoke of in a bogie tone, shown in a lurid light, contrasted with an impossible goodness."

The joy of spring filled every place. The light elasticity of youth bade shadows begone, bathed itself in the sunshine of the present, basked in the immediate relief from pain and anguish.

I flitted from one to another of the sunny alleys, feeling volatile and French enough to laugh at all ethical systems that could not square themselves with pleasantness. Presently, perchance, the dark shadow would reassert itself. Now—now—was truce after a deadly battle, light in a stormy sky.

"Thus," thought I, "must Laïs have felt—and fierce reprobation has since howled through time and space at her name; when, given the same nature, the same physique, the same joy in mere living, thousands more would share in the single note of condemnation now spent on her name alone."

I was even wickeder. I laughed as I arranged the pinky cyclamens for a breast-knot, to a gown of soft and fluttering India silk, whose creamy white fell in a thousand folds, voluminous as foam, clinging as cobweb, one of the many smuggled products of Leith enterprise, brought

to me by Stellarig, and bought as a morning gown.

It was truly a lovely morning. Standing on a knoll in the grounds I could see the Firth, its restless waves glancing in the sunlight. Far off on the links was Sir Burleigh, enjoying his solitary grandeur, d—— cavillers, and comfortably wrapped up in coat-armour of egotism —a man of the world, a man as likely to relinquish any substantial good as a lion is to reflect on its injustice in preying on giraffes or antelopes.

"He has undoubtedly earned it," think I, remembering the grandeur of the Manor, and its loss—his many years' substantial aid to the cause. "Why should he not enjoy it? Sergius is but a peevish moralist, who would have everyone transformed to something else—

> Fishes longing plains to graze,
> Beasts to skim along the waves.'

"Poor Sergius!" thought I, with quick remorse. "He is too good for us," and with a sigh I looked round.

A figure was coming along the unclipped alley, which the knoll ended — a figure which at once, to me, blighted the sunshine, took the life and light from the spring day, brought back clouds and gloom. It was the girl

we had seen on Arthur's Seat on our first coming to Edinbro'. I at once recognized her, the wild and mournful beauty of her face and straying locks of yellow hair.

"Come down," said she, signing more than speaking, and slowly I descended, wondering how she had gained entrance.

"Eh, but ye are bonny," said she, womanlike rapidly running her eyes over my graceful attire. "Ye dinna look joost like as ye were ane of us, a human creature, but some white fairy or fay, witchin' folk. But that's not it, mem. I hae a skute yon, waitin' for me ashore. Mem, I hae a message to ye."

"What is it?" said I, wondering at the rare beauty of her face, half hid in the plaid, drawn overhead.

"Mem," said she, after a pause, "I hae joostly reflectit, he has a richt to luve ye, yet it braks my heart, for erewhile he luved me alane. I tell ye he will swear no, yet 'tis true."

"What do you mean?" said I, austerely.

"I mean Kilmarnock," said she; "he luves you. Ay, not a footstep o' him but I know. He lives for ye, and wad sae dee, but an ye are happy wi' the grazie-mon yonder on the links, Duke he is now. Be ye ware o' the other, for sea an' land he will compass to win ye. 'Tis not for

likin' of ye I tell this, but hoo can I wish him to gae till anither—him that was ance my ain, though he denies it the noo I am a bit dementit," she went on, "but dinna ye believe I wad tell sae black a lee o' him for nought. He wad tak' ye awa', force or fraud, 'tis a ane to Willie Kilmarnock. An' mak' ye deem ye cam o' yer ain will. Ay, but he luves ye dearly. I watch him. He has a nest in the auld town—a beauty nest for a bird yet uncaught, yet uncaged. 'Life's uncertain,' says Will. Ay, like a preacher, 'an' all is vanity. I'll hae a wheen happy hours while I may.' That is as he thinks. Fare ye weel, lady, 'tis not for yere sake I speak, but my ain."

"Ailsie," said I gently, pitying her evident craze, "believe me, you do a bitter wrong in thus slandering him. You are mad, yet know enough to be aware of wrongdoing. Let me help you with some money."

"Nae," said she, shaking her head. "When I was cast awa for nae faut o' my ain, but being I wasna joost clever like some, tho' then I wasna crazed, but were ignorant, simple, an' tired him wi' my country clavers an' want o' wit an' spirit, I swore I wad destroy myself, body an' saul, an' pit it a' down to him at the judgment, an' that I hae kept to through a'. I winna say I hae nae re-

lentin's, whiles I pray that a' may be impute to my ain sel; then my puir tired brain gaes awhirl agen. 'Tis not that I wad save ye frae sufferin', but keep him frae joy an' delight. Fare ye weel, mem. I hae a skute an' a bonny fisher-laddie awaitin' on me. Ye hae yer luvers, I hae mine. Eh, the warld wad be gude eneuch but for women. As they tempted Adam, sae they will e'en gae on till the end." She turned and went, but of which gate I did not see, lost to sight amongst the untrimmed shrubs.

"'Tis a shame," I reflected, reascending the knoll, "to slander Sergius so. But she is mad, and not over reliable, and 'tis a vice of human nature to think each as bad as they themselves are. I wish they would lock the gates. I have dropped my bunch of cyclamen, gaping and listening to this sibyl. Sir Burleigh has turned homeward. 'Tis true she has some means of secret intelligence—some lover, perhaps, amongst the Hanover people. She has a lovely face, and has not been without intelligence."

So dismissing her, I strove to reassume the bright and light thoughts she had interrupted. Not very successfully—yet enough, as I saw Sir Burleigh near the sea-gate, to go and lock him out, hearing him swear he had left it

open, and shake it impatiently. Then I opened it, letting it hide me in its swing back.

"By——! it's bewitched," said he, shutting it, half afraid at its pranks. "Oh, it is you, my darling! What a lovely white rose you look, Nell, in that gown!"

"You beautiful duke," said I, "beg the gate's pardon. 'Tis a smuggled gown, from Leith."

We walked up to the house hand-in-hand. Nearing it I saw a pair of broad shoulders at the window, enveloped in tartan, and above them an erect head, both facing someone within the room.

"'Tis the Prince," said Saunder, whom we met in the hall. "He has been here an hour about. The Laird is with him."

"Has he asked for me?" said Sir Burleigh.

"No, sir," said Saunder. "He asked was you and milady here."

"What does he mean?" said Sir Burleigh, as we gained our apartments. "Now we are ill-friends, I dare not present myself uncalled—for Casimir, when he so chooses, is a very devil for etiquette. Well, well, he must win out of it soon or late, and we must be patient."

He flung himself into an armchair with a sigh. To be banished from his idolized Prince was a

cruel trial. He could bear to quarrel with, to cavil at, to differ from him; but that, being near, he should not see or speak to him, was as hard to bear as to a woman banishment from her lover.

"Let him alone," said I, hemming some ruffles for Sir Burleigh's evening wear. "He seems, sir, to be in uniform. Is that a sign of any forwarding of events?"

"Yes," said he, with some agitation. "It is sign to his friends, whose significance cannot be over-estimated. He has told me that, when confident of complete success, he should put it on, nor again doff it till he was declared Regent for the King, his father. He must have had good news, and now—now turns ingrate. Helen, I cannot bear it. I will go to him, if only to reproach him for this avoidance, this keeping me in the dark."

"Have patience, sir, stay for awhile in the dark. It would ill become you to reproach him for a momentary forgetfulness, in this first glance of spring."

"It would so," he assented, gloomily. "We are all too hard on the poor lad. Will it be long, I wonder, ere he comes?"

"Let us dine here," I suggested. "As he so evidently wishes to be alone, 'twould be acceptable to him."

So, chafing and wounded at no summons coming for him, Sir Burleigh ordered Saunder to bring dinner to our own rooms, and presently, as had I anticipated, my gentleman walked in, uniform and all. He was very grand and stately. I had much ado not to smile—for Sir Burleigh's loyal gratitude at this condescension—tho' he strove hard to keep it within due bounds—soon melted the ice of reserve of his idol towards him, and they took wine together in the friendliest way.

"I have been engaged with the Abbé Dupont," he said, with a sigh. "After dinner, Sir Burleigh, will you go and listen to his embassy? It is to you mainly, and he will best explain it."

Sir Burleigh's mouth closed grimly. "I will so," said he; "but, whatever its tenour, sir, your promise holds?"

"Sir," said Stuart, "that will be as you will, on later advice."

"Then I will, with your permission, go at once," said Sir Burleigh, and receiving an assent, he went.

On the doors closing, Stuart came and sat beside me.

"Helen," said he, "Dupont brings bad news for Sir Burleigh. I do not expect he will bear it stoically. Dear, I wish for your sake 'twas

better, but I am powerless to prevent it; believe this when you hear me blamed."

"He will not blame you, sir."

"That I am not sure of, but you will hear it all. Now of ourselves. It is useless for you to avoid me; for him to forge new chains. Let this negotiation turn out how it will, I have done my part in it, nor will I, if it fail, be set aside."

With an angry consciousness that the dukedom was in his thoughts, a bitter feeling that Kilmarnock's every word had been proven from his own lips, I moved away from him, then, stealing a glance at his mortified and aggrieved aspect, relented.

"You look well in uniform," said I.

"And you also in Stuart-white," said he, with a slight sarcastic bow. Then angrily, "I had better kept away. God knows I have troubles enough, yet you delight to add to them." Then, although he had owned himself better away, the tartan arms closed round the Stuart-white, and our lips met.

"Nell," said he, presently, "this is new life to me. Dear, I wish I dare tell you how gigantic are the strides the cause has made within this few weeks. Practically, Edinbro' is ours; seven clans are sworn on the dirk in our service. All this were illimitable happiness could I con-

tent Sir Burleigh, whose heart is set on a present impossibility, or keep you from rebellion; 'tis that makes me miserable. But it cannot go on, nor shall not—this separation, for a whim of his; this robbery of you from me. You are more to me than seventy clans, than a thousand Cliffords. You are before me literally day and night. Guess, then, the cruelty to me of this last forcible parting; no word from you, no knowledge of you, save that you were living. Oh, my dear, were it to choose I would choose you before a kingdom! Tell me you love me still—your poor Casimir, 'whom virtue raised and envy hath o'erthrown.'"

"Don't be so supremely absurd," said I, laughing at this anti-climax, at which he laughed too.

"Presently," sighed I, "a Court for this lank-haired, tartan-clad Hielander, and for me banishment—for I neither can nor will see warmer hearts, lovelier faces win away his love."

Sighing, I told him this, not as a present fear, but as future certainty. "In straits, in distresses, you have thought of me too highly; in success, in splendour, I shall fade from your memory, as a glow-worm would fade in the sunrise."

"About glow-worms," said he, "I know little, but enough of you and of myself to know myself constant till death."

"Yet," said I once more, "success assured, I must leave you for your sake."

"And for your own," said he, "what of that?"

"My future, I have sworn it, will be devoted to Sir Burleigh; he was good to me when alone and miserable—that I will never forget. Dear, you have now no long while to wait, as every thing prospers so well."

"For others, yes, but not for me. My life is but a dreary striving to content a crowd of men whose loyalty shows itself in distressing, harassing, and robbing me; in snatching beforehand honours and preferments; in lowering me abroad; in inflicting this deadly wound at home. Why should you be taken from me at a word of another? Had I first robbed him, there were justice in it; but 'twas he first snatched you from me. You know it, yet persist in calling it goodness on his part. Goodness! By ——! it was but a close calculation of chances. That I swear. Dismiss this idea of his 'goodness' from your mind. He has his dukedom, and should now be content. It has cost me enough. Helen, have some pity on me—some justice. When you talk to me of success satisfying—of a Court estranging—'tis but a country dream. A Court is but a home to me, and what is home to a man broken-hearted? The grave were

better. Success is not assured—it wavers. If my whole mind be filled with gloom and despondency, how can I work to cheer, to inspirit, to command men who look to me?—not to words only, or to actions, but to a cheerful bearing. Stuart of Appin asked me yesterday, was I ill? The rest looked at me curiously, implying contempt that a Highlander should let a little stay in the hills render him unfit for service. These men—who, on a pinch, will have snow for a pillow—despise weakness; but the hardiest of them would shrink from the icy despair your desertion caused me. Helen, you must unsay any extorted promise to Sir Burleigh. It is to me you owe allegiance."

"It is too late," said I, "nor was it extorted; rather, willingly given; he has had injustice—has shown me mercy and forgiveness. Cannot you now be content, with this new honour, to let past dishonour die out of his life, out of mine?"

"Helen," said he, "do you dare term my love for you dishonour, and defend the fraud he committed as 'honour,' because 'twas done in formal words? I tell you he is—as are all the Cliffords—a Catholic, and, as such, his marriage to you is no more legal than his will or caprice shall make it so. Put it how you will—legally,

you are no more to Sir Burleigh than his mistress; and if, as Duke of Denzillac, he desires another alliance, as it may chance so—for, beyond being an instrument of his preferment, and a familiar presence which contents him, he has no love for you—he can bid you begone to-morrow."

The words were scarce off his lips when, attended by the thin, shadowy Abbé Dupont, Sir Burleigh re-entered. A silent fury seemed to possess him, broken at length, as he flung a letter, large and officially sealed, at Stuart's feet.

"Sir," said he, "I do not reproach you with this only, but with the insult, the obloquy, of being befooled by specious promises; made a gazing-stock to the Court of France; led on, blindly trusting in an influence you overrated, or cared not for exerting."

"Sir," said Stuart, flashing into an equal rage, "am I to gather your meaning from your words, or seek explanation of them in this dispatch, flung at me thus roughly?"

"This dispatch, as you may surmise, perhaps know, contains a formal withdrawal of the King's sanction to the patent for me. My God! am I to stand this from you—you? Leave the room, madam, the house"—he turned on me, who was gazing thunderstruck at

this fury, than which I had before seen nothing so lurid in his whole nature—"you shall bemock me no more. Your promise, scarce off your lips, broke! Go! I trusted you to little purpose—you are no longer my wife. I call God to witness to my patience! If, as Helen Rohan, you can do better, take that name—but beware how you again misuse mine. Go from my sight, with whom, to whom you may be welcome! For me, I will see you no more for ever. Go!" he repeated in low thunderous tones, like the mutter of a lion ere it roar. "But for you this had never been, nor I stand here degraded, heartbroke."

He shook and trembled with passion, from head to foot a palsy of fury possessed him. His hands were clenched on some large, official-looking paper, so tightly as to crumple it out of all shape.

"Sir," said Dupont mildly, "surely 'tis not wise to visit my unwelcome message on this lady."

"Sir," said I, in agitation, snatching a plaid, "do not plead for me."

"Go!" uttered Sir Burleigh again, in that higher note which is the prelude of violence, and his hands unclasping, the letter they held fell to the floor. Quick as thought Dupont stepped between us—he had raised his hand to strike me.

"Go, madam," he whispered, "this will pass." Then as I went, and the door was gently closed by him, I heard an instant confusion within the room, of what nature I could not say—no voices, but a rapid movement of many feet, and a groan. Half-way down the stairs I met Saunder coming up.

"Milady," said he, "there is a fisher-lad in the hall with a message for you, which he desires to tell himself."

I went down, and he pursued his way, going to Stellarig's room. With weary straining eyes I looked round the dim narrow hall.

"Who are you," said I aloud, "that wish to speak with me?"

A boy came forward, a lout of eighteen or thereabout. "Gude guide ye, mem," said he. "Ailsie Fraser wad speak wi' you, but dinna ye ken, she daurna shew her face intill Stellarig, sae weel kenned as Ailsie is. I am her cousin, mem, a fisher o' Fife, across the strait yon."

"I will go to her," said I, "lead on." Muffled in a plaid, in abject misery, I followed this uncouth guide, half-minded to say aloud that I too was too weel kenned to daur Stellarig. Outside the sea-gate stood Ailsie.

"Sae ye keepit it locked sin I won in," said she. "But, mem, if ye knew it, there's

worse than puir Ailsie. I but loved him too weel."

"Ailsie," said I, "I must to Edinbro'; tell me your will as we walk on. I must to some hiding, some shelter."

"Must ye sae?" said Ailsie gleefully, "an 'wull ye walk wi' me? Eh, but 'tis bonny to be in gude company, wi' a gude woman."

"I am not that," said I, sobbing convulsively. "Ailsie, I am turned out, as you were, but I am wickeder, far."

"Dinna ye threne," said she, "'twas but a sight o' yere bonny face I craved, an' a soft word; but God is gude, He lens you me awhile. Mem, will I tak ye to my hame?—'tis in a wynd where nane will find ye, friens or foes. 'Tis clean an' whoolsome, for my mither lives there, an' a' her sorrow is she canna clean it mair—puir, decent, auld doited body. She was whiles head housekeeper to milord's father."

"Take me there," said I, "but not yet; leave me awhile."

We were on the sand-dunes, the soft and still darkness setting on them, slippery dry sand and tufts of coarse grass making my steps uncertain, filling my silk shoes as with lead. Left alone I sat down, and moaned to the uncertain moaning

of the sea, stretching darkly in front, breaking in little dashes on the sands.

Why was I exiled into this waste of sand, of darkness, companioned by that low and ceaseless moan of water, as though it bore in its bosom sighs from distant shores, grief gathered in many lands, and came hungering for mine? Nothing sharp or defined of the scene of my banishment came to me; all was as a dull dream, with shadowy actors.

"Let me not wake to it here," thought I, with dull anguish, "let me escape for ever from familiar wrong, cruelty, oppression."

I rose. Ailsie hovered near and we resumed our rapid way. The fisher-lad had gone down to his boat, and was now away on the waters. As in a dream we gained the town, and shrouded in our plaids went quickly on.

"Where are we going?" I stopped once, and once only, to consider the wild erratic nature of my guide. "Do not take me into any danger, only away from them."

"No, mem, 'tis to my ain mither I tak' ye."

No doubt of her good faith came to me. Obscuring my mental vision came that dream again of flying from oppression, nor left me till, winding up a flight of broken stairs, we gained a door on a wide landing. The whole tenement seemed bare

and deserted—a house in flats, of which this only seemed let.

Ailsie opened the door with a key she carried and invited me to enter. An old woman sat spinning by the hearth, the creamy flax hanging from the distaff. The wheel stopped at our entrance; a small fire was on the hearth, a sowans-pot beside it, and a griddle hanging on a nail in the ingle. The room was large, clean, bare, and shadowy.

"Do not turn me out," said I, approaching her, a wildness in my speech, induced by the excitement I had but reined in, by fear of reproach even here.

"Hoots, lassie," said she to Ailsie, "why do ye bring your wild companions here. Is this poor thing homeless?"

"Yes," said I, "and friendless and hated."

"My God!" said she, "but ye are bonny an' fine. Ailsie, wha is this? nane o' your companions, lass."

"Yes," said Ailsie, "frae Leith. Ah! 'tis the free fisher-lads gie the bonny white silks like faulds o' snaw, an' the smuggler men the gowd gems. See, mither, till her face, ye canna wonder then that she is a' bravery an' richness."

"Dinna tech her, you," said the woman, rising as Ailsie drew off my plaid in sport, and showed

my dress and jewels. "This is nae fisher-lad's callet, or I hae lived wi' high folk for little. What, my dear, do ye wi' Ailsie?"

"She is turned out," said Ailsie, "as I was."

And this shameful truth I confirmed with bitter tears—turned out, glad of this shelter, to bear the keen questioning of this stranger, to find a friend in this outcast, being in truth such as she had become.

"Dinna weep," said the old dame. "We will not harm ye. Fairy, said you? Belike your frens had dune weel if insted o' such clavers they had taught ye the vairse, 'Pit na yere trust in Princes, nor in any child o' man.' Man is altogether lighter than vanity's sel. Sure I am ye hae a' that can attract the eye—but many bonny leddies I hae seen in my time, in Ha' an' Castle, left for callets wi'out a charm. Certain hell will no rin short o' men. My dear, it was wild o' ye to trust to such as Ailsie, tho' I that am her ain mither say it; whiles she might hae brought ye to some den o' iniquity, 'stead o' straight hame to me—whose only shame in life is hersel."

"I wouldna her," said Ailsie, nor nane that werena more than willin' to gae there athout my guidin'; whiles they will folly an' track me, then 'tis their ain doin'."

I rose and sat down in a chair, erect and dazed. Already I felt stifled with the emptiness of my life—how long, how interminable, since I had been at Stellarig. This vacant dungeon stopped me from thinking, pressed upon me the eternity of absence from all of interest, of life. How did people live to grow old, in silence, in spinning, in solitude such as this? Oh, for some familiar presence! An impatience akin to madness seized me, of this quiet, bounded in by walls, dully lit; of the wonder and the comments of the old woman—a need of some strong counteraction to the excitement I felt, possessed me. What had happened yonder? I paced up and down the room, oblivious of these humble wretches, choking with anguish, feeling this banishment as one might feel the first hour in hell.

"Dinna greet," said Ailsie. I motioned her aside, and went out; I must breathe my woe alone, under the sky, or stifle.

Ailsie followed me humbly and wistfully, the dame reseating herself to her spinning, offering no remark, used so to the wildness of Ailsie's moods as to think little of this apparent insanity of distress rejecting aid. We walked on—on—to Arthur's Seat. The town was quiet—'twas late. Solitude, fatigue, dulled somewhat the

anguish of thought. For hours we wandered, meeting no one. In vain I adjured Ailsie to leave me. The constant poor wretch seemed as I had bewitched her.

"Winna ye rest, mem?" said she at length, whimpering with fatigue. We were near the chapel ruins; entering, we sat on some fallen stones. In a moment she fell asleep. Soon thought itself ceased, watched over by the myriad stars of the quiet sky. I slept also, cooled by the night winds wandering over us, untroubled by dreams. Towards morning a smart shower awoke us, and, hand-in-hand, like two lost children, we retraced our way in the dark dawn to her mother's house, and entered silently. The dame was placidly asleep, the room cheerless. Ailsie crept up beside her mother, and I found a chair, and kneeling beside it, pillowed my head on my arms and slept again—'tis misery's one refuge. The soft swirr of a besom moving lightly over the floor, disturbed me. I arose. Mistress Fraser, for so she told me was her name, was sweeping the clean, worm-eaten boards.

"There isna ony dust," she explained, "or I had waked your leddyship; 'tis but that I collect the ends o' yarn, and burn them. Eh, mem, to think as careless as we throw yon on the fire, so sall the wicked be burnt up with fire unquench-

able. 'Tis an awfu thocht, an' reconciles ane to Ailsie's being mad; for, puir lassie, she canna be caaed to account at all for what she does."

Preparing porridge, which we supped with good new milk, fetched by Ailsie, she, after neatly redding up the rooms, set to her work of spinning, giving me, at my entreaty, some worsted to knit stockings.

"But you're a real gude knitter," she said, as I rapidly wove up with them despairing thoughts. "I never saw a lady sae richt down a knitter; nae slurs to your work, mem."

"Are you going to let me stay with you?" I asked, "or what? Do not turn me out at night. Tell me now."

"You may stay," said she drearily. "I hae but little, yet it's no warld's mercy I wad pit ye to for want o' shelter."

"Take this," said I earnestly, offering her a crown-piece.

"My dear," said she, putting it away, "God forbid I do ye ae wrong by misdoubtin, 'tis not that; but poor Ailsie will whiles bring me money, an' it scorches my soul to see it, let be tak' it. She tells me some gie it her from pure charity. It maybe sae, but for years I hae been in decent honest service, an' canna bide the smell o' money unearned. If ever I want, there's Willie Kilmar-

nock will gie to me, him that was Lord Boyd, an' I his very own nurse. Ailsie talks o' him, but 'tis a' fause, happen she saw him first when she was getting the better o' brain fever, an' fixed on him as the cause of it; but milord is but ower gude to her an' to me, an' as steady a mariet man as is in Scotland."

The slow day dragged on drearily. We had some kale broth at twelve—by six I put it down as a year in my chronicle of time. The yarn was finished, and Ailsie, signing to me to come too, offered to take it home.

"Do sae," said her mother; "an', lassie, bring hame some dry haddies for supper, an' a bit butter, the young leddy is used to fine fare."

"Dinna ye fash yersel'," muttered Ailsie, as, glad to get out, I followed her down the stairs. "I'll tak' her where gowd wilna be thocht ower gude for her to eat."

"I will not go," said I, suspicious. "Tell me where, Ailsie?"

"Intill nae danger," said she sullenly. "Trust me. First we will gae to the warehouse wi' this," and crossing several wynds she entered a shop, imperiously deposited the spun-yarn, and demanded the money.

"Nae hurry, Ailsie, lass," said the shopkeeper

blithely. "There 'tis, an' a bittock for yersel. Who is yon waiting for ye?"

"Your betters," said she, snatching up the money. The man, who seemed good-natured, smiled, and made no retort.

"I am tired," said I, as breathlessly we crossed several streets, ill-lighted and worse paved, into an unfamiliar quarter of the city.

"'Tis not now far," said she, "an' no dirty outside stair to it, neither"—the outside stairs to upper stories being generally, in poor neighbourhoods, extremely dirty and repulsive. The inside one, however, was dark, of stone, and cold as a vault, lit in all its windings by one iron lamp at the mid turn.

Ailsie flew up, as though animated by fear. I ascended more slowly, wondering. On the dark landing we stopped. Ailsie knocked, then pushed the door open and entered, holding my hand.

"He is there," she muttered, "but I canna see them greet. Yon, mem, is Willie Kilmarnock."

Closing the door, she went down the stairs rapidly. I turned irresolutely. Before me, on an old worn sofa, Kilmarnock lay fast asleep—the shining horsehair cover showing by its glossy

blackness the pallor and weariness of his face, a small iron lamp on the high mantel shedding light and shadows over the room.

What a position was mine! Brought here, unknowing whither I came, by this semi-lunatic, I did not know my way again, unguided, to her abode. She was now far off, pursuit useless. I sat down in a chair, humbly awaiting his waking; then, looking upon him, bitter thoughts possessed me. He had claimed to be my friend, yet, knowing me absolutely flung on the world, in a strange city, homeless, penniless, he could sleep and let me die, despair, wander away. For a long time he slept. The lamp seemed to grow more steady for his regular breathing, though 'twas not near him. I had not then heard of air-currents, except in connection with open doors, windows, these we call draughts; but watching the connection between the steadiness of the lamp and the quiet breath, I thought of the widening circles of water into which a stone is flung, of their imperceptible gradations; and when in his sleep he stirred and sighed, I looked to the lamp—'twas moved. The light flame fluttered like an answering sigh. He awoke and rose stiffly, and moving to the lamp trimmed the uneven wick, brought it to the table, and put it down, its lowered light

disclosing me in my seat near the door, the plaid over my head.

"Ailsie," said he impatiently and sternly, "I will not have this, I am in trouble enough; leave my room, or I will put you out as I warned, you."

In effect, he took me by the arm, something ungently, though not roughly. "I am sorry," he said, "that you force this on me, but I will not have you here, be sure of it."

"'Tis but to say a word," said I, with hurrying sobs which would scarce let me speak—for in my strange humiliation I felt almost as 'twere meant for me.

"Why, 'tis Helen!" said he, recoiling as though in a dream. "My dear, forgive me! Why did you not speak? Oh, my darling! to see you again after the horrors of last night—the dreadful thoughts of to-day! I was on the links till near dawn; after on Arthur's Seat, searching for you. My God! what bitter fear I have had for you—what a heaven to feel you safe!"

His arms clasped me closely, convulsively. His anger with Ailsie had been gentle to the roughness of this embrace—the passionate strength of his arms hurt me.

"You lost child," said he, with a laugh that was half a sob, "where were you all night? By

God, I wish that old ruffian Sir Burleigh was dead instead of but ill! 'Twas a villainous deed. You shall tell me of it presently. Come now, and rest. I have been asleep, and ask no better awakening the day of my death than to see you."

"Do not talk so," said I. "What shall I do?"

"Take it as final," said he, his eyes darkening and contracting, "as the climax of wrong and oppression. Why did you before reject my warning? Do not tell me he has been good to you. It is false. Your poor, piteous eyes might plead to cannibals for better protection, kinder care, than he has ever given you. By ——! this Clifford creed of yours is hard to shake; you was brought up in it, and it clings to you, against evidence of frightful wrong inflicted by him. Is he so much better than that consummate villain, Verney Clifford? True, he plays for high stakes, must in his dotage be a duke, bargaining for it with you. By ——! I could strike my dirk to his heart and feel it no murder, I so hate him for your sake. What this last move means I will tell you. He has driven Casimir to extremities about this dukedom, and, now it has been definitely refused, his fury turns on you. Yet he counted his influence over you secure, nor dreamed of your fear impelling you to flight—his plan being to

separate you till new terms were made for this title."

"Sergius, stop! I am wretched enough, this fury with Sir Burleigh will not help me. It makes me miserable. I neither can nor will believe it, was it all ten thousand times attested instead of surmised."

"Surmised," said he, palely, "is the civillest word I have yet heard applied to it; yet, Helen, railing thus is useless—useless as to rail at the stripes in a tiger."

"He is no tiger," said I, choked with unshed tears, "but for me none would dare reflect on him. Is it not enough that I am cause of his friend's alienation? The extreme of my misery is to have hurt him, who befriended me."

"Speak of him no more," said he, harshly, "or I shall counsel your return to him, since he can do no wrong."

With quick breath and angry eyes he ceased his walk up and down, sitting beside me on the harsh sofa.

"My dear," said he, "why should you return to Sir Burleigh? He is even now seeking you far and wide; for, his fury spent, 'twas not your loss he desired; yet what is your fate in his hands? Can you not credit me? You would be happy, once free of him, even should it chance you

had no other friend on earth—but you have. You have talent, beauty. You have but to leave him, to find a haven where you would be worshipped; where a life, a soul, would be yours; where is a heart all love for you, a mind by which your infinite charm can be felt, comprehended; a devotion that can slacken but with death—nor then, for I shall love you to eternity—for ever, for ever! Helen, you know I love you—have long known it. Dare you profess an indifference to my pain, my long agony of waiting, hoping, longing, my true patience?"

His eyes dwelt on mine, burning and eager—a glance from which I shrank appalled for him.

"You dare not tell me that Clifford is more to you than my love. 'Twould kill me. Why should I, who love you more than the whole world, be put aside for this ambitious dotard, for a chance of his relenting so far as to again desire your presence in furtherance of his schemes—I, who would risk my life for you, who love you so, that without you life is worthless?"

He took my hands, which trembled with pity for him, into his, caressing them with lips now passionately silent, waiting but for one glance of hope. I looked down, afraid to trust mine eyes as interpreters to a conflict of feeling,

gratitude, warm regard, friendship—love, whispered my heart, as bitter thoughts arose of those others, beside whom this true and steadfast love of his was as a star beside a beacon light.

To feel myself still cared for, still regarded, was passing sweet, after the bitterness of banishment, the outrage of public disownment; for had not the Abbé Dupont, who was an emissary of Louis' Court, heard my repudiation, which now would cling to me? Would it not be better for Sir Burleigh that I should not return to him—convince those sceptics who doubted, that his honour had not been bartered for a title? Grief and anger battled stormily in my breast, choking shame at the putting away, the angry edict—just it might be, but why make me an object of scorn and contumely to those who knew not of my love for him?

Beside me was this sweet, insidious whisper of a love which had been ever true and tender—had changed for no caprice, swerved for no fault, no unworthiness—had steadfastly regarded my happiness, worked for my content.

All the old easy indifference to Kilmarnock's love changed—the half-pitying allowance of it, the hiding from my very thoughts its intense, enduring force. All its thin disguise of friendship fled for ever, torn off in this storm, from

the fierceness of which he sought to refuge me.

"I am disgraced," thought I bitterly. "He but seeks, by this sacrifice of himself, to save me the pain of universal rejection. 'Tis an effect of that pity for me even an enemy might now feel."

Then, again, a rush of remembrance sent away the humiliation of that thought—'twas I who had pitied him, he who had loved."

He did not speak; the heavy sighs of his panting heart half frightened me, keeping me silent. Why, if it could content him to take up a disgraced and ruined life, despised by all the world save himself, should I refuse so poor a reward for the illimitable love he had so long felt for me—his true and tried service, his sympathy, which was never failing, and was so sweet, so precious, in this dark hour of disgrace and desolation? His dukedom was more precious to Sir Burleigh than I, or he had not so furiously bid me begone—while to Kilmarnock I was the one object on earth longed for, loved, worshipped. He did not whisper this; his heart seemed to throb to suffocation, his hands clasped mine crushingly.

"Eh, sirs!" Ailsie's voice fell like a thunderclap on us, startling me from guilty and despair-

ing thoughts, as she glided in. "Hae ye nae thocht o' the toun's time? 'Twill be nine by clock, likely, an' I but cam' before to tellt ye, mem, that the big grazie-mon, Sir Burleigh, is caming for ye. Will Kilmarnock is mariet, mem, as ye suld ken, tho' he whiles forgets it himsel', like the auld sang:

> 'When he began to court my luve,
> An' wi' his sugared words to move,
> His tempting looks an' flatterin' cheer
> In time to me did not appear.'"

"My God!" said Kilmarnock, as I withdrew my hands, "is this witch to separate us? Helen, you cannot——. Woman! how dare you come hither? Leave, or I will fling you down the stone stairs, nor care if it kill you."

"I care na either," sobbed Ailsie; "what is my life to me wathout love?"

"Or mine to me?" said Kilmarnock, despairingly.

"Go, Ailsie, woman; go, for God's sake! Go, I will forgive you—only go."

He followed and closed the door on her—yet, ere closing it, caught, as I did, the distant echo of Sir Burleigh's voice, swearing at the darkness as he stumbled up the stone stairway.

"I will keep him out," said Sergius, his face white as death, his eyes lightnings of rage and

despair. "He shall kill me ere I suffer him to insult you by his presence—recapture you."

Yet, at the mute entreaty of my face, the supplication of my clasped hands, he threw wide the door, as Sir Burleigh, stumbling on the last steep stair, came in.

"Helen," said he, coming forward, having no eyes for Sergius or aught beside, "how dare you leave me, giving me this errant chase, which might have cost us all so dear had we been seen?"

I kept my seat, my tired feet aching yet with the long midnight walk over rough places. I was conscious of regarding him without emotion, with gravity—as one listens to a stranger's errand, prepared, though indifferent to it, for some decision which shall be just, some award that shall meet the case. This unmoved calm seemed startling to him, my steady gaze to puzzle and baffle him. Something in my face, perhaps —worn and weary and grief-struck, too tired for tears, too outworn for any emotion, either of anger or pleasure—proved to him more than words that he could not throw from or snatch back a human heart at will, that wrath leaves ofttimes a bitter woe as its sequent shadow. Ah, how bitter the woe from which each had escaped! Thought of it blanched my face; I trembled

as though with cold, rejecting his offered hands —a silent and cold rejection for which he was unprepared, increased his alarm and perplexity, generally forgave at a word—this sitting in judgment had to him the new and strange terror of a tribunal at whose bar he was unprepared to plead. 'Twas as though he had come prepared for anger, reproaches, and forgiveness, to a statue, Yet 'twas but an intensity of physical fatigue produced this momentary indifference, 'Twas thus that nature relieved the severe tension of mind. 'Twas not thus Sir Burleigh interpreted it, setting it down to a settled scorn and anger, a desire of prolonging his humiliation of repentance—as an idol, could it feel, might delight to see an offending votary in the dust before its shrine.

I saw and felt aggrieved at this imputed littleness. Nothing that could hurt or injure him had now attraction for me, now that he regretted his angry and frantic injustice, and sought forgiveness. This icy atmosphere into which he had rushed, resolved on reparation, assured of affection, even in tears and reproaches, seemed for the moment to stun or stupefy him. He looked from one to the other, from the pale and haughty impassiveness of Kilmarnock's face to the wan haggardness of mine.

"You are no friend to her, Sergius," said he at length, in a low, angry tone, "if you have preached up rebellion for this angry and mad act of mine to Helen. Bethink you how in the like case you would desire a friend to mediate. I own myself wrong; yet, left to herself, Helen would forgive me."

"I beg your pardon, Sir Burleigh. If my presence has this adverse influence I will withdraw."

"Come, now," said Sir Burleigh, scarce attending to him, "I ask how you dare put me on this errant chase?"

For a while I would not reply, regarding him with steady anger, almost hate, for his reproach to Sergius.

"Your errantry," said I at length, "is without avail, sir. I shall not return with you."

"By——! you shall," said he sternly. "Is a wry word to a wife to be visited thus? Nell, I will not defend myself, my dear, I am heartily sorry. 'Twas cruel; but could you know how I suffered for it you would forgive me. I was mad, beside myself at some cursed news from France."

"Forgive!" said I, through my teeth. "Always forgive. Sir, when you struck me you were after repentant. When you have killed me will be the

same easy penitence." Yet my heart rebuked me for the words—Sir Burleigh's face showed worn and haggard lines of care and sleeplessness, of pain.

Kilmarnock withdrew to the inner room, careless of closing the door, desirous only of keeping restraint on his hate and anger by being unseen.

"'Twas no easy penitence," said he, with a groan. "But you may stab with what bitter words you will, 'tis but bare justice."

"'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'" The long ago Bible lore, learnt at the farm, came to me as I looked at the bowed-down head, the grief-lined face. I knew he had suffered severely, that out of every hundred women ninety-nine would but have withdrew till his fury was over. But severity from him had bewildered me into this extreme course.

"What is to follow this outrage?" said I, standing up straight and erect as a judge, with calm, severe eyes, into which some amusement was creeping, so submissive, humble was his tone.

"Nothing," said he, raising his eyes humbly. I covered mine with my hand, conscious of their relenting.

"Sir Burleigh," said I, "you have, by the law of Scotland, divorced me. You have bid me resume my own name."

"D—— the law of Scotland. I defy any law that will try to part us. Madam, I will have no more of this, 'tis flat rebellion. Doubtless but for Sergius sending word you was here, you were willing to stay with him?"

"Doubtless. Sir, your uncivilness shall not get me home the sooner. I can stay here. Sergius will not turn me out, though he was willing you should go."

"Come, Helen, my darling. Is not this enough? I know I shall not get off easily, none better. Yet, my dear, I was out nigh half the night seeking you. Some fisher-lad came this morning to tell me you were with an old aunt of his, and going there awhile since, she sent her daughter to guide me hither. Milord's message followed me. He, too, was with us, so I know he was not here. What have I said that he has taken amiss?" he added in bewilderment, looking round for him.

"Will you not have some wine, Sir Burleigh?"

Sergius came out, his face pale to bloodlessness, his tone calm and equable, his eyes (which he kept averted) dull, withdrawn, and terrible.

"Thank you, milord. Give milady some, for we have a cold walk. Come, Helen, 'tis not poison, though Sergius is no judge, and 'twould be indifferent to him was it so. You are a judge, by my teaching, you runaway minx.

Sergius, good night! Come, Helen, we are trespassing on Kilmarnock."

So, without more ado, I went, not displeased.

* * * * * *

"Let us," said I, "being now great persons, give the lie to De Comines, the chronicler of Courts, who asserts that they are peculiarly apt to distress themselves over trifles, idle apprehensions, or extravagant reports."

Sir Burleigh had gout, and was sitting, grim and taciturn, in an armchair, near the fire. I had been reading to him from De Comines' Memoirs. We were alone in Stellarig; the Prince and Sergius away—the one in the hills, Kilmarnock in France. We were very lonely, but satisfied to be at peace for awhile; only some inward fret corroded the calm to Sir Burleigh—some new negotiation about the hateful Denzillac. He was very gentle to me, which I did not like. Being alway used to the grim and sardonic Sir Burleigh, this gouty duke seemed half strange—I told him so.

"Ah!" said he, "could I but undo the past; be gentle to you, my dear, all along; forget that I have been cruel, harsh."

"No, sir, you were in the right:

> 'A woman, a hound, a walnut-tree:
> The more they're beat the better they be,'

Is a true old country saw. I wonder Philip, here, does not give some account how dukes of old-time beat their wives. See, here, he says: 'No creature is exempt from adversity; every man eats his bread in pain and sorrow. God Almighty promised it to our first parents, and has performed it very faithfully since to all people; yet there are degrees and distinctions of sorrow, and the troubles and vexations of the mind are greater than those of the body.'"

"That's so," said he. "Now, Helen, put away your history. I think those long-ago folk live for you—in pictures, memoirs—but, my dear, I want you nearer. Here's a letter of Casimir's to read to me; his writing is hard to construe."

This I was like to refuse doing. What was in it? With a sudden jar it brought back what De Comines calls "God Almighty's promise of pain and sorrow to all."

"Give it me," said I at length, placing the book on the table, and taking the folded paper he produced from his breast-pocket. I rapidly scanned it, then read aloud:

"Leith, N.B.,
"Feb., 1745.

"My dear Father,

"Sir Burleigh C. has this moment placed in my hands the letter sent him, which

Dupont brought from you, in which, without consulting me, you have half rescinded the promised dukedom.

"Sure to God, I, as leader of this expedition, know—being on the spot—best who and what to reward, and, having been invested with plenary powers to do so—having, moreover, in this case, fully consulted your Grace—it is hard on me, as leader, to have this cat-and-mouse play with one of the most constant, most loyal and useful allys. I tell you—begging pardon of your Grace for boldness—that if I am thus discredited, 'tis enough to make any man lukewarm to a cause which knows no better than so to detract from our efforts, and so discredit our deservings. It was the cause of a painful scene, to which I need not further advert, as I was reproached, so far as his loyalty would let him, for this beggarly withdrawal of a gift he has fully earned, and worthily deserved to have. I beg your Grace to be moved to my prayer, rather than to the envious, adverse councils, who have been, from malice, trying to overthrow my credit with your Majesty. I, who know all the shades of feeling about it—who have experienced the powerfullest support, the warmest friendship from this adherent, may surely have a word in this business; and I insist that my honour is in its prompt and

final re-bestowal, in the best terms that can now be made.

"Henry, to whom I have writ more fully on all matters than I can venture to trouble your Grace with, will, I am sure, be of my mind; so before proceeding with any further business, though much that is urgent awaits me, I must claim, with great respect, to have this removed from my path, as an unendurable stain on my honour and fealty—as I cannot expect, otherwise, faith from any in my most solemn assurances, if this is discredited by your Majesty. With humble duty to your Grace, believe me, dear father, your loving son,

"CHARLES EDWARD."

"That he wrote, Nell, the other night." Sir Burleigh re-pocketed the precious draft. "Dupont brought a most damnable letter from the King, though I say it. It made me stark mad; but he was started back with this, writ clean out of hand, and whether it be granted or withheld, 'tis none his fault or failure."

"No," said I, "'twill be some peevish councillor who envies you, but will yet be yours for all the delay."

Hardily as I spoke, the happy brightness of the room grew dull and dark, with hurrying

and sombre thoughts. "Oh!" thought I, "were we but back at the Manor, at rest! Then we thought little of our home. Now—— Was it the evening shadows that made this dulness?"

"What are you thinking of?" said Sir Burleigh, half harshly.

"Of dinner, sir; and whether you may eat grilled wild-duck with red pepper or no?"

"I am afraid not," he sighed, "nor no wine, Helen; but 'twill do me as much good to see you eat it. Haggis must do for me."

I went out and gave Saunder orders not to bring in the grilled moorfowl, and he, improving on it, calmly asserted they had not been sent in that day from Fife, as the men were all away fishing. So we had haggis and mountain mutton, soup and oysters, and champagne—for it was too cruel to keep Sir Burleigh without wine altogether. And after dinner we put away De Comines, and fell to talking of Verney Clifford, whom for so long we had not spoke of. Now, the hope of a near reversal of the Act of Confiscation for Jacobites, helped us to speak calmly of his small chance of keeping the Manor.

"I would not grudge it him when I die," said he, "but that you like it, and there may be then a rightdown Clifford to claim it. In that case, I

will make up to Verney in other ways, for he was reared in expectancy of the Manor; yet money will content him as well—he has no love for it."

"Do not talk of dying," said I, "or in that case will it to Verney, for there I would never live without you—I could not. For was I to go into the study, I should expect to see you drinking wine. How could I bear to miss you? Was I to die, and you, sir, marry again, or even go to live there alone——"

"Helen!" he thundered, "stop! you are making this d——d gout ten thousand times worse."

"'Tis the champagne," said I, half whimpering at the lugubrious thought of the lonely Manor. "'Tis said to be a cheerful wine, but I hate it. So long as you had port, the Manor, and me, you was content. Now, you are going to—oh, cruel!—to let me die and marry someone else."

"I am not," he asseverated with an oath, "nor it needs no prophet to see that your death would kill me. I should go search for you Nell, in the picture-gallery, at the farm, on the terrace—and once thought of you dead, my heart would break clean in two. Come, what need for this, my dear? I am but fifty-nine yet, and, once settled

again, we will be happy—the happier for past clouds; no lot is free from them."

The wind howled without, in the fury of the vernal equinox, dashing the waves far up on the shore; no fishers would be away from their homes to-night. Heavy curtains draperied the windows. Pushing these aside for a moment, I saw the wild waves' line of white tumbling up as though ready to engulf Stellarig. The tree-tops were bent in sheaves, swaying as though to sweep it away; the black sky lowered as to crush it. Within reigned light, warmth, peace, love. Some restless impulse urged me to quit these for awhile, to go out and see for myself the grand battle of the elements. Sir Burleigh was dozing; the warmth of wine, of fire, had stilled the demon of gout, he would not for a while miss me.

I took a plaid, put on thick boots, and went out, pausing, ere I closed the door, to see was he comfortable, then went leisurely down the stairs, and out through a wicket door in the large hall door, to the wild garden, threading the now familiar paths to the sea-gate. The roar of the waves as I opened it struck me with sudden terror. Was it safe so to venture, yet how else had Stellarig stood all these long years? Here the waves attained their utmost fury, coming to

within a few yards of the wall, which was buttressed by and built on half-sunk rocks. A heavy shower of spray fell on me, the wind tore open the plaid and deluged me with chillness. Wrapping it anew around me, I stood watching with awe and delight the stormy brotherhood of wind and tide at rough play, and went along the strip of still uncovered rock a few yards, till turning a curve I could see the scattered huts of the honest fishers, each with its little beacon of light, like starfishes on the coast.

"Sure no boats will be out to-night," thought I, "only the water-kelpies sporting on the hissing waste, chasing each other on the breakers."

So absorbing, once the chillness over, became to me the countless waves hurrying up, that I forgot time, space, existence almost, in their fierce, never-ceasing race, and, leaning against the buttressed wall, watched them untiringly—till the wise reflection occurring to me, in a momentary pause of the wind, that, though they might spend hours at this pastime, I had a now awake and probably angry partner awaiting my return. I retraced my way to the gate; it was shut, but hammering on it with a stone for awhile, 'twas opened by Saunders, who carried a horn lantern, and seemed startled out of his usual calm.

"Eh, sirs," said he, "Sir Burleigh has been

asking for ye, mem, an' is nigh mad at missin' ye, for nane knew whither ye had gane, nor could tell him where to speer for ye."

"'Tis all right," said I, laughing, as I speeded before this *ignis fatuus* into the house, and, leaving my wet plaid in the hall, went upstairs to the presence of my offended lord, who sullenly disclaimed any special anxiety (before he was asked) as to my absence; then asked the Laird, who was there, croaking ominous prophecies of the danger of the coast on such nights, "Was there not a fool born every day, and was not I one?"

"I manna gae sae far agate as that," was the cautious reply, "but it wasna ower wiselike"—and to me—"Now, mem, ye were the better of a drap whisky an' some oatcake."

This he would have offered to Aphrodite in the like case; so I took it, though needing it not at all. Saunder coming in with a new log for the fire, beamed through his impassiveness on this restoration and domestic bliss, evidently preferring it to searching in a storm-tossed garden with a lantern.

After a while the Laird withdrew, having given anecdotes of various "fules," who all bore a strong family likeness to me, but had now only tradition for their heritage, having lost their lives

on stormy nights on the coast—whether driven ashore or carried off seaward he did not explain, nor I ask.

"Ring for Saunder!" said Sir Burleigh, with some asperity, having disdained to speak, in answer to an account of the sea and its clamours so near to us, "I am tired."

So Saunder, the ubiquitous, came and helped him off to bed, and I drew nearer the fire, and thought of all the sea heroes and myths—still possessed with the charm of its strength, the might of its freshness, the power of its wrath.

I heard an arrival downstairs, and going out on to the landing, listened, the voices echoing through the half-empty halls of Stellarig. 'Twas Kilmarnock back again. Had he truly crossed this stormy night? Dignity counselled me to go within, and await Saunder's calm and measured announcement of his master's presence; pity for the storm-tossed traveller, impatience to greet the true friend, hurried me half unaware downstairs into the hall. He was in the sitting-room beyond; thither I went. Stellarig was away getting refreshment in Saunder's absence. Sergius stood by the fire, storm-tossed, white, and tired.

"How good of you!" said he, as I came forward. "Helen, 'tis an awful night at sea."

"To think of your crossing!" said I, aghast for him, and the risk he had run in an open boat in those terrible waves.

"Ay," said he, half bitterly, "we were half-drowned; but a king's messenger, and a duke's, must not set too great store by his life."

"What of dukes?" said I, paling at this dreadful accusation, as it seemed, that his life was risked over the disputed title. "Oh, milord, surely that was not the cause of this danger to you?"

"'Tis no matter," said he, with still more bitterness, "it is now accomplished, so my life will be safe awhile."

"A hungry is an angry mon." Stellarig re-entering caught the tone, though not the words, of this poor drenched traveller's speech, and hastened — after setting food before him, and whisky—to mend the fire, and take his soaked plaid from him, which he had apparently forgot to remove, carrying it away.

"'Tis so," said I, "and we are monopolizing Saunder. Sir Burleigh has gout, and he attends on him. I will go and send him to you."

"Leave his Grace an attendant, Helen, I am very well." Yet he could not eat—cold, wet, and miserable.

I ran upstairs and hurried Saunder by knock-

ing at the door, and saying Stellarig wanted him; desiring him, on the landing, to request his master not to see Sir Burleigh to-night, as excitement might bring on renewed gout. This he promised, and, going into our room, I found the light carefully lowered, and Sir Burleigh asleep.

So while without the gale raged—and wind and sea, missing their lawful prey, came in search of him to the very gate of Stellarig—all within slept, careless of dignities, of advancements, of powers and principalities, claiming for their frail humanity but shelter and warmth—as at last all will lie down in the dust, equalised, the busy dreams of life banished for ever; the toiling brain, the aching heart, the wearied life, at peace.

I was not present when Kilmarnock made the announcement to Sir Burleigh that all opposition to the granting of the ducal patent was withdrawn, and that it was now permanently secured to him and to his heirs for ever, with the unanimous sanction of the Council.

This so elated Sir Burleigh that my very moderate and qualified congratulation was construed into a dire offence, and I was banished the room, the edict of such exile expressly

stipulating that I was not to dare dream of venturing out of call.

"I will sit on the stairs, then," said I angrily, "and so do public penance," and so for a while I did; but finding it draughty and cold, I sought the sitting-room, where was a fire. Sergius was there, sitting over it idly and listlessly, while the Abbé Dupont, standing near, talked to him rapidly in French, but on my entrance stopped, and gracefully congratulated me, asking leave to wait on the Duke for the same purpose, and, receiving it, at once withdrawing to Sir Burleigh.

"Dupont is a proper courtier," said Sergius with a smile, as the sedate priest walked slowly away, revolving pleasant phrases. "You, it seems, are not, nor was I very successful; but it is now accomplished."

"Are you ill?" I inquired, half frightened at the pallor and sternness of his face, now that the wintry smile had passed from it.

"Yes," said he; "eleven hours in an open boat, and some days' posting in bitter weather, are trying even to a strong man armed—for the pleasant mission I was on should have armoured me."

"I am sorry," said I humbly, "that our affairs are the cause of hurting you. You should go

home for a while and rest. In your Northern eyry, even a few days would bring pleasanter thoughts, and the kind nursing of Dame Margaret completely cure you. You would return 'a giant refreshed with wine.'"

"Keep that simile for your brand-new Duke," said he, with an angry bitterness the kind advice scarce warranted. "Helen, there is no doubt of your playing the Duchess well. Your first words show you heartless enough for any height of dignity."

I did not ask him how?—nor argue that to banish a man to his home was aught but kindness—but stood embarrassed and silent under this unfounded charge.

"If you desire my absence I will leave Stellarig." He rose and spoke passionately. "Face to face with death last night I thought of you. Scarce entered, you bid me begone. Is it pastime to you to hurt me?"

"You know it is not. I am truly concerned that you are ill, and counselled for you."

"Banishment were no cure," said he gloomily. "In France I counted the hours that kept me from Leith."

"It is a quaint pretty place," said I demurely, "and your work is here; but surely, milord" —then seeing a new anger in his face, said half

angrily myself, "Why do you find fault with me for nothing?"

"'Tis not for nothing," he began vehemently.

Just then the Abbé Dupont re-entered, and conveyed Sir Burleigh's request for my immediate attendance, with which, glad to so get away, I instantly complied.

"So," thought I, as I arranged a pillow for the ducal head and a woollen wrap for the ducal foot, "Sergius is getting a very rebel to good counsel."

"Sir," said I, patting the Duke's head to ensure attention, for he was in a reverie, "shall I call you Duke, or Grace, or what? I am truly desirous of being respectful, but never met an ermine before."

After essaying both titles at different times, we slid back to the familiar name, keeping the other for state use only.

Indifferent good news might sometimes cure gout; but this excitement aggravated it to an intensity seldom before suffered, as though the dignity enhanced its power on the victim. Yet 'twas more meekly borne than usual, content being as a strong anodyne. Sergius, too, was laid up with severe rheumatism, consequent on the long exposure at sea. Saunder told me he was very patient, and read and wrote a great deal, and

was very kindly companioned by Dupont. Without a formal and express invite I did not like to go and see him—and that, from pride, he would not send, remaining in his crippled solitude, as I guessed, angry and wounded by apparent neglect.

At length Dupont, paying us a visit, which Sir Burleigh found extremely pleasant and acceptable—as he agreed with every mood, and placed events exactly as his hearer wished them to appear—asked leave that Kilmarnock might see me, and obtained it at once.

Like a truant who fears the schoolmaster, I went, brimful of reasons for not before coming, and found him, neither angry nor reproachful, but tranquilly reading.

"Has Dupont come with you?" he asked, after greetings.

Finding him left in humane attendance on the Duke, he blamed him for allowing so great a lady as Her Grace of Denzillac to come unattended to a sick stranger.

"That you are a stranger is due to your own strangeness," said I. "Could I but have guessed myself welcome I would have gladly come."

Sergius put down the book, and held out both hands.

"Helen," said he, "forgive my peevishness.

'Who preferreth peace
More than I do, except I be provoked?'

Your absence has been so long, so marked. What have I done to offend you?" In effect, he pleaded earnestly for pardon for a thousand imagined offences, which had been the trifles diverting his mind during illness. "Had you but spoke a word a day to me," he complained, "so many webs had not gathered in my mind."

"Are they gone now?" said I, laying my cool hand on his forehead, and then, when his eyes closed in uttermost content, smoothing his dark brown hair, which was silky as a woman's.

"Yes," he murmured, as one mesmerised.

This magnetic influence lasted for awhile, then was banished by my asking milord would he not risk the draughty passages and dine with us?

"I don't know," he groaned, shifting uneasily. "I shall be but a dull guest, with all this rack at work in my bones."

"Oh, come," said I, "our rooms are warmer, more airy than this. We have pictures in our rooms, and a carpet. In our rooms we make much of 'Titians,' and this is the noblest Titian of them all."

"Do not tease me," said he, half laughing. "I am happier than the most renowned Titian,

in being able to see you with living eyes. Nell, you are a lovely woman! I never saw another so perfect. You are like Plato's Charmides, only so much more subtlely lovely, as being woman."

"Ay," said I. "He was a boy, was he not? a beautiful, gold-haired Greek? Is it not strange that in their discourses on beauty they chose to eulogise boys? Boys, pshaw! Put Boyd and me in a row, and see which is handsomest."

"Poor Boyd is not a Greek," said he, with a sigh; "but I own that union of strength, slenderness, and symmetry is my ideal, and that you have."

"And you only rheumatism—very unfair; but you shall have some dinner—wild duck. Sergius," I continued anxiously, "I wish the same *entente cordiale* characterised our party as of old. Then 'twas not apparent. Now, looking back, how good and gracious we all were at the Manor, how happy! Those golden days are gone. Now all our study seems to be to distress each the other, to disunite, to destroy the innocent glamour which forms the chief happiness of imperfect humanity; to show thought and action to be alike base and ignoble. Up to a certain point glamour is all of happiness

one has. One cannot live in perpetual *dies iræ*."

"Helen," said he sternly, "we agreed—though God knows, with bitter anguish to me—that the past in all its blackness was fate, that no further pain or poison should be extracted from it. Yet this agreement was wrung from me by the conviction that in so agreeing I saved you from suffering. Do not imagine I have relented in their regard. You are innocent as an angel who has wandered by chance into hell; but for those two—and chiefly Denzillac, to give him his dear-bought title—to them I could not feel other than abhorrence, were my soul depending on it. I must continue to act with them, in that all my worldly honour is concerned; but to forgive them is beyond me."

"Have you forgiven me?" said I, tears dropping heavily from mine eyes at the stern unrelentingness of his tone. "I cannot be an executioner. Cease to be their judge—every harsh word of them condemns me. It is cruel of you to torment me. Cannot you remember, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'? You are like some stern priest of a stern creed. See how many creeds, whose victims were numbered by the thousand, are now outworn, forgotten! To be condemned by you is acutest misery to me.

Can you justify its infliction? Have you the right to inflict bitter, irreparable pain on anyone? You are pitiless! Grant them guilty, have not the very worst criminals ever had some one who loved them, careless of their guilt or innocence? I am not apologist for their sins; but I love Sir Burleigh—were you to prove him a devil I could not hate him."

"I have proved him one," hissed Sergius, his face rigid with hate and scorn "and that other a weak and wavering dupe. I tell you, I hate Denzillac. His intellect, which is of no mean order, compels respect till the thought that it has plotted against you, that for worldly honours he has bartered his very soul, recurs. Yet you love him! Was he not a fiend, the piteous cruelty, the sordid iniquity of his planned and deliberate sacrifice, could not have been imagined in face of your constant, unwavering affection and duty to him. Had he been a criminal of the blackest, on any other count, I had been silent; rejoiced in your happiness; been content to minister heaped-up honours, rewards in which you would share. But in this my honour is concerned. I cannot keep silence, even if speech be useless. You shall not share this poisoned peach unwarned.

"Serguis" said I,distressed almost beyond bear-

ing, "believe me—though conscious of your integrity, of the blackness of their conduct as regarded by you—incapable of change as regards Sir Burleigh. I have known him a lifetime. Mine is no passive friendship to him ; it is part of my life. To save him danger or distress I would incur both. You cannot tell how much he is to me. He never willingly distressed me, his kindness has been perpetual, unceasing. Grant this a superstition ; an African worship of white Obi, only intensest misery to me would result from conversion, and your nobler worship of abstract justice, of honour, though it convinces my mind, cannot displace him from my heart. Yet be my friend still, even though you, as you must, despise me."

"Helen," said he, in some agitation, "my dear, there is truth in what you say. I have been brutal—in this abstract justice—to you, whom, God knows! I would shield from pain with my life. It is but little wonder you shrank from the gloomy monitor—the creed that condemns you for the crimes of others. Dear, forgive me! We will return to white Obi and happiness."

In effect, Sergius, when he presently joined us at dinner, seemed as he had cast off from his mind some leaden weight of doubt and displeasure, and was again the Sergius of old-time.

Sir Burleigh, who had at his first coming been constrained and harshly cold in manner, unbent before the calm geniality, the amiable friendliness of Kilmarnock; and Dupont, who was the fourth of our party, looked at him in furtive surprise; then, as some incidental reference was made to Sir Burleigh's vast fortune—now invested in French securities—smiled, as to say: "So wealth and rank—two resistless allies—have won over even this honourable sceptic. Bah! men cavil at both, yet are thus easily conquered by them."

Drawing aside from a political discussion, carried on after dinner by Dupont and Sir Burleigh, in which everything was settled with a delightful smoothness Kilmarnock's rough tongue might have disturbed—as Dupont first listened to Sir Burleigh and then agreed to all his major propositions, only entering minor protests to be overruled—we made a similar little coterie at a distance, as I listened to Sergius and agreed with everything he asserted—even to the proposition that he could confute the general prejudice against Alberoni's appearance, as he happened to have a portrait of him taken during his life—in the '15.

"Helen," said he, at length, ceasing to be flattered by this rapt attention, as suspecting its

bonâ fides, "you are thinking of something else!"

"No," said I, "I protest only of Alberoni and his portrait; but—but, if you must know, it is so lovely for us all to dwell together in unity once more, that I would listen to, and agree to, anything—even the apotheosis of an ugly old Spaniard."

"Ugly he was not," said Sergius stubbornly, "and, as a statesman, none could excel him in talent."

"He was very well," said I, "but is dead; besides, he was a priest; besides, there are other statesman better than him:

> 'Far in the wild, unknown to public view,
> From youth to age a reverend statesman grew;
> The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell;
> His food, the fruit; his drink, the crystal well.'

Unfortunately, these domestic arrangements, though self-denying, tended to rheumatism, and he came here:

> 'Far from the wild.'"

"Very well, you shall see Alberoni's portrait."

"Sir, there is my statesman. Why do you laugh?"

"Are we to go on all the evening talking of Alberoni?"

"No; I truly admire him; but I want first to know of your last voyage—all your hardships,

one by one, that I may pity them. Some other time, when I am inclined, we will recall the Spaniard. Tell me, now, does not our warm room do you good?"

Thus was broken the peace of unqualified accord; yet the hundred little disputes that followed amused and cheered him far more than a dead calm, and when I attempted slily to reintroduce disquisition, he was the one to summarily stop it.

Dupont often glanced across to our distant seat. Once, Sir Burleigh, impatient at this attention to us distracting his attention from himself, reproved me.

"Helen, you are keeping Sergius from the fire."

"The room is warm enough," we both called with one accord, as it was; but Dupont, recalled to his complaisant listening, it, is doubtful if our reply met with any heed at all.

"The room is, in fact, stifling," said Sergius; "but for being near a snow-flake I could not endure it."

In this he referred to my white silk robe, which, as it looked so well, I had kept on, adding, for its evening adornment, two or three diamonds at the neck.

"I hope you know it is smuggled," said I,

rising, and shaking out its soft folds; "but Charmides' tunic was probably bought from Illyrian pirates, so it is all right, and Stuart white besides.

"Why," said he bitterly, "the Stuarts should choose white as their colour 'twould be hard to say—black were better."

A gloomy silence fell on us. Some of this reproach, though unintended, fell on me. I, who was an habitant of the hills of the robbers, could not hear a disquisition on honesty unmoved. Involuntarily I covered my eyes with my hand; then, removing it, asked, though in a trembling voice, for Alberoni's portrait, and taking it across asked Dupont's opinion on it.

Sir Burleigh, whose uncle had been in the '15, immediately eulogised the minister whose aid to the Jacobite cause then had been so substantial. Dupont also praised him, discovering in his features traits of nobleness and intellect. While this went on Sergius sat silent and sombre as a thundercloud in his distant seat, unmoved by the praises of the man he himself had praised.

"He looks kind," said I, returning it to Kilmarnock, "and must have been intellectual. 'Tis a pity they so seldom go together."

I was for going, but the anger and agitation

of his manner as he took the picture convinced me that my best course was to stop. Better still 'twould have been, and more usual, to have taken no note of the remark; but Sergius' lightest word affected me.

"Helen," said he, in a low tone, as I resumed my seat, "may I not even distantly glance at Stuart, knowing him as I do, without instantly making you my enemy?"

"I will never wear white again," said I, bitterly. "You, who know so well how unhappy I am, shall have no more reason to charge hypocrisy against me. But about Alberoni. What did he want Sicily for, so much? So this bygone statesman will serve milord to finish the evening, both for us and for Dupont and Denzillac."

This last word I shot as an arrow at milord, who bitterly hated the title. Miserable myself, I was reckless in inflicting pain on him.

"The evening is over for me," said he, with ill-repressed passion, "and I wish to God I had not come!"

"It is not half over," said I, beginning to see the absurdity of all this tragic business. "Now sit down," for he had half-risen, stiffly, "and I will tell you of an infallible cure for rheumatism."

"I will not," said he.

"Oh! you will not. Very well. Now see what slenderness, strength, and symmetry can do."

I put my hands on his shoulders, and yielding to their heavy pressure he sat down, still sullen.

"Put," said I, "an ounce of camphor into two drachms of water, and drink a little every day—that is certain."

"Where is Doctor Sangrado?" said Sir Burleigh, who heard this, having become a little tired of Dupont. "Come, Helen, you have teased Sergius enough with pretended remedies. Come and cure my gout."

"Monsieur l'Abbé will do that, sir."

So Dupont set off on this new theme, and again Sir Burleigh lent willing attention; while Sergius, uttering penitential thanksgivings for being forgiven, forgot Alberoni again, and at length, being twice reminded by Dupont of the late hour, went off with him, happy and reconciled.

* * * * *

We lingered awhile when our guests were gone, Sir Burleigh, elate, yet silent, seeming ill-disposed to quit the warm, well-lit room. Gout, after an unusually long tenure, had gone; that alone was enough to account for some of this exultant joy of manner—but not for the silence. He even seemed to forget my presence, and, un-

willing to trespass on his pleasant reverie—being beside somewhat disheartened at the length and complete silence and mystery of Stuart's absence —I was for noiselessly withdrawing, when, in passing him, he held out his hand to stop me.

"Helen," said he, "you shall share this good news, which has not even been communicated to Sergius. Casimir has raised by loan and purchase four thousand stand of arms. He has got the Doutelle in commission, ready to start at an hour's notice, and when he decides on coming over will be escorted by a French man-of-war ship. The Highlands are all ready to rise; this will be as a torch to a magazine, and we shall see Hanover blown to——. Will you not read his letter?"

"No," said I, putting it back, while a dark mist for a moment obscured from my sight the brightness of the room, the elation of Sir Burleigh's face. "I am glad, sir; but—but I am tired," and, hurrying from him into the dark and chill dismalness of our room, instead of joy, of hope, a black pall-like cloud of foreboding, rising as from the earth, enveloped me. Willingly I would have rejoiced with him—some strong power turned joy to despair. I struggled against it in vain. "Some evil fate is in it," said I, with tearless sobs. "Poor

Casimir, poor Casimir!"—and with a pity for him which rent my heart, I fell into the oblivion of sleep.

'Twas midnight when my eyes closed. The sense of suffocating woe, intangible, black, haunted my sleep, and awaking—for its intolerable anguish would afford but slight respite—I rose and returned, ghost-like, to the sitting-room. The embers of the large log fire still glowed; the Titian faces glanced shadowy and weird from the walls. The room was warm, with an ebbing warmth that momently gave way to the encroachments of the cold, outer night—as life gives place, year by year, to death. A dull agony, which no reasoning could dispel, held my mind. I walked with bare feet, soundless footsteps, to and fro. No coherent train of thought, no reasonable image of danger, presented itself, that I might have combated. All was vast, vague, indefinite—a very madness of terror, yet terror that was intangible. No one actor was prominent in this chaos; all seemed wrecked in it, sinking ever deeper into blackening gulfs, faint and shadowy agonized and lost. Could I have shrieked or raved, Cassandra fashion, it had been a partial relief; but that sanity forbade. Madness, even, has its privileges; delirium its liberty. Seized by this strong agony, I was of necessity voiceless. The

sea outside might rave over the rocks, yet could not, in all its vastness, hold so deep an anguish as this. The fire, which I was not regarding, yet saw, wavered, blackened, and died out. Consciousness left me, in mercy, as self-control darkened and died—and whether I fell or sank to the floor I shall never know.

* * * * * *

Cold, cramped, and wretched, I went out in the early dawn for a sea bath among the rocks. The tide was flowing in, the rocks icy cold, the wind stiff and chilling; yet I persevered—holding it, as Spartans held it, a disgrace that the body should overrule the mind.

"You," said I, "must at once banish this tranced misery, this groundless desolation, by any extreme of penance." And I went in, wringing the sea-water from my wet hair—cold, pulseless, half-lifeless, some of the mental misery lightened by being forced to share in the discomforts of the body.

Kilmarnock breakfasted with us, remarking on the singularly cold spring we were having.

"Helen looks cold," said Sir Burleigh, who had won from me the account of my rocky bath, with which he was much displeased, "see her blue hands! She has been emulating the mermaids—dipping and diving in the Firth."

"Is it possible!" said Sergius, "so wretched a morning."

"I had a wretched night," said I, "a perfect cyclone of dreary imagings swept over me; so I did penance for allowing so much mastery to mind, by giving matter a turn on the rack."

"Or the rock," said Sir Burleigh with a laugh. "However, I must truly recommend no such balance to be struck in future."

In effect, this rashly sirenesque proceeding invalided me for a few days. Sir Burleigh tramped off to Edinbro' without my cognizance, and came back with an old Jacobite doctor—very much to my mortification—who was rather proud of my Spartan endurance; though if the natives of Sparta had to sit pulseless and half-lifeless after every hardship, as I had, 'twould have made an inactive nation of them.

"So," said Doctor Porteous, "this is the lady, sir?"

"Sir," said I, indignantly, "you are unexpected."

"But not therefore unwelcome, I hope," he returned, bowing, "since I am, as all here are, friends to the cause."

In effect, he pronounced my ailment to be a slight rheumatic fever, and urged immediate change, were it only for a week, from the sea

air and sea fogs, to a drier atmosphere inland.

"There is something on the mind, too," he remarked aside to Sir Burleigh, as I sat listlessly considering his recipe for cure, "which you can doubtless win from her. No father-confessor like a good husband."

"You are an old impertinent," thought I, as he drew on his gloves and departed, "Jacobite or no."

"What is it, my dear," said Sir Burleigh bluntly, "that weighs on your mind, as Porteous calls it? He is a very clever man. Porteous will be physician in ordinary at Holyrood soon, Nell."

"The sooner the better," say I ungraciously. "He is not wanted at Stellarig. Why, sir, do you torment me? Is it not enough to be ill and miserable, without an old Jacobite buzzing round one? I will not go away."

"We will soon see that," said he angrily; and Kilmarnock coming in found the traces of this dissension in Sir Burleigh's lowering brow, and the scarce-dried tears in my eyes, at his harsh tone. He instantly referred the contention to him.

"Why," said I smiling, "now we have Dr. Porteous father-confessor with a vengeance. Why should Sergius be tormented with me and

my rebellion? I meant to give in, was you not so harsh about it," and weakness or folly again set the ready tears flowing.

"Lady Kilmarnock is at Muirhaig," said Sergius, stating a case judicially, without siding with either, though in his darkening eyes I could see a distinct anger. "That is but thirty miles from here, scarce a day's post. Since change is necessary for Lady Clifford, she would be most welcome there. It is but a hunting-lodge," he explained to me, "of no great capacity, yet comfortable enough."

"Thank you, milord," interposed Sir Burleigh, resolved on carrying his point. "If Milady Kilmarnock can put up with so peevish a woman for a week, 'twill be kindly done."

"I will write at once," said Sergius; and, though unwilling, I had to appear thankful when the runner returned with a coldly-worded invitation from milady for a week's visit.

Stellarig drove me over in a country cart. I had parted coldly from Sir Burleigh, and not seen Kilmarnock.

Afterwards I found that, privately, Porteous had given rigid orders for my removal from Stellarig, his careless, indifferent suggestion of it being but a feint lest I should be excited or alarmed.

"He told me," said Sir Burleigh, "that you were on the brink of brain fever; that so much harassing excitement, though worn off by all others in action, in journeys hither and thither, in your case burnt like a smouldering fire, tiring the mind even in sleep. That is why, my dear, I seemed unkind about it. God knows 'twas a hard parting for me to let you go, grieved and with astonished eyes away, with scarce a farewell!"

At the time, with cramped and listless limbs, mind weary and torpid, aching head and burning eyes, I felt it cruel to be moved from familiar surroundings. The journey, too, made me aware of the far greater hold this illness had than I supposed. I was weary, worn out, and truly indifferent to everything. My mind seemed to refuse to act, to see things only as a spectator—I no participant—as we drove to Muirhaig.

"Everyone is willing to part with me," was the unconsoling thought haunting me like a dull pain; "even Sergius gladly planned this banishment."

Thought of our former meeting did not trouble me; kindness or coldness could make but little difference in my meeting with Lady Kilmarnock. I was not acutely alive enough to take fine

shades of feeling into account—physical and mental suffering rendering feelings obtuse, pride dormant. The Laird was kindly silent. Generally loquacious when friendly, he kept his attention on the two rough horses we drove, on the road. So we journeyed till, rolling in, after many hours' travel, through grey stone pillars —moss-grown, gateless, yet evidently the boundaries of some domain—we crossed a wild park, still half a moor, whose trees, chiefly pine, stood giant and gaunt, in clans or families, distinct and severe, where united they might have formed a small forest. We drew up before a low, grey stone house, large and somewhat imposing, standing in the park, unsoftened by any garden or cultivated ground. Here Stellarig was for carefully lifting me out ; but I could alight without help, and with him entered the hall, and so through to a large sitting-room, where a fire of pine-logs blazed cheerily. Here I sat down exhausted, weary, but wondering no more than had it all been a dream.

The Laird withdrew, and presently a tall woman entered. I knew her commanding figure, her kindly Scotch face—'twas Lady Kilmarnock.

"My dear Lady Clifford," said she, "I am glad to see you, though grieved for your illness. We must see what Muirhaig air and good nur-

sing will do for this feverishness. We shall be alone here but for Boyd, who has a few days' leave. Let me take your cloak."

Boyd entered, saluting me. He was much more like his mother than Sergius, though when together I had thought there to be a strong resemblance to him. A little feeble amazement at all this was, however, all my mind would compass, and that soon died down into an irritable consciousness of weakness, which, like Egyptian darkness, was as a solid atmosphere—everything was a weariness. Boyd's staring became nigh insupportable from its sameness and monotony—though five minutes before it had been new.

These two figures, the mother and son, passed before me in perpetual phantasmagoria—not truly, but to my weary mind. I longed for darkness and silence, and during dinner learned to hate Boyd feebly, in that he wore Hieland dress, took wine with his mother, and stared at me—though had he closed his eyes, drank hemlock, and dressed in sheepskin, weary malevolence had not thereby been lessened. At night every unstrung nerve trembled itself back into some order and repose, to recommence with waking. I could settle to nothing, and loathed life with its minutiæ of observance.

Porteous came out once from Edinbro'. He dined with us, and stayed the night. I asked him might I not return with him.

"The next time," said he—and to Lady Kilmarnock described my case as "deplorable," she told me after.

"Rheumatism there is," said he, "but nervous fever also; strict quiet alone can avert a perhaps fatal illness. Do not tire her even with kindness; a great deal of letting alone is what I both prescribe and strictly enjoin. Her brain has been unduly excited—some secret pressure, some want or woe unsoftened, unshared, is still on it. Let alone, it is strong and able to combat it; harassed or excited it must succumb. I have confidence in your management. By the the way, Milord Kilmarnock mentioned that Lady Clifford is fond of chess. To that, though it may seem strange, I have no objection. To her it would never be more than a theoretic pastime. So if you, milady——"

"Tell milord," said she abruptly, in her deep sweet voice, "that the physician who prescribes should administer. I have no knowledge of the game."

"You are, I am aware, only too good to give up so much time and attention to a comparative stranger."

"Did I not," said she, in uncontrolled anger, "I should run a risk of his thinking me a murderess, should anything befall this Greek-faced puppet of the Prince's—and his. For her he would risk the world. Sir, I have my orders like any Guselidis. I can at least obey."

"Madam," said Porteous coldly, "this is too great risk for a patient of mine to run. I will not argue of milord's devotion to you, which is so well known, but rather remove the cause of this distrust. The noise and din of Edinburgh would be less hurtful to her than a suspicion of such a feeling on your part. Get me her ready, I myself will take care of her."

"That you will not," said she resolutely. "Porteous, we are old friends, you may trust me. Though this were ten times true, now is no time for visiting it on her, nor can you think me capable of it."

"I do not," said he, half distrustfully. "But believe me, though she is very beautiful, no Lady Clifford can compare with you to milord."

"Even were it so," said she bitterly, "milord is doubtless but used as a foil to her lover, the Prince."

"Truly," said Porteous with a grim bow, "we are anticipating Court *Chroniques Scandaleuses*. This is the first swallow of that summer which

ladies and courtiers delight in. Possibly the Prince has never seen her. 'Tis disloyal to so darken his name while he is using supernatural efforts to gain allies whom such a story might alienate. 'Tis cruel and unlike you. As for the young lady, she is devoted to her husband."

"We will say no more of it," said milady. "If I am disloyal, cruel, slanderous, and false, I can at least justify your faith and milord's in the care of this new-made Duchess—so soon to be Queen, in all but name."

"Ah, woman, woman!" said Porteous; "dowered you all are with imagination; pray God you had a little solid reasoning power, to call it back from its far flights. Well, I trust to your discretion, and will come to-morrow to see my patient. Do not be strange or harsh to her; let her find rest here."

No stranger was I made in that kindly Scotch home. Yet the strict repose essential to my cure was straitly observed. Boyd would leave his staring, Dame Margaret her knitting, at the least sign of weariness of their company, twenty times a day, to return softly as sunlight. Every day in that quiet house, with that loving mother and son, new thoughts arose, free from pain, from retrospection. I almost forgot my past, and would go out for little rambles with one or

other of them, and come in stronger, better. The pine knots were ever alight on the hearth. The quiet and friendly house seemed ever the same—soothing, peaceful, not strange, but something true and tender, differing from all my experiences, in that no demand was made on mind or heart. No fierce passions—love, hate, anger, suspicion—found entrance. Lord Boyd was like a brother—gentle, quiet, thoughtful; Lady Margaret a sister—strong, patient, tender; forgiving, like charity, all things; hoping, like love, all things.

By degrees—like the frozen serpent warmed in the pitying bosom of the countryman, with fast renewing health and strength, that came arrogantly back, not with humble steps, but with one swift rush—something of distance and reserve began between my hostess and myself. The soft light of her smile was less frequent; fits of gravity held her, as frost holds the ice-bound brook; her active help and kindness still flowed on beneath this surface coldness. Yet I felt it, and first trembled at, then resented it—the first use I made of recovered health being, as I bitterly accused myself, to nourish an active dislike to my benefactress.

She, on her part, was not guiltless; for on my carelessly asking news of milord, she betrayed

an excitement and anger which would scarce allow her to reply coldly that he was well, but too much occupied to come.

"Though he could plan for and send *you*," she added with the inflection of jealous contempt I felt to be wholly undeserved.

I looked at her disdainfully, pride and anger stifling gratitude; and, gathering her letters, she rose and left the room, Boyd going with her.

"The Scotch are all mad," said I contemptuously. "I will go ere she can, by quarrelling, efface the friendship I feel for her. I will go, even if I walk to Leith, and, alas! that I am not able to do."

Nor had I sufficient resolution to disclose my intention of returning, though my heart burned with indignation at her now studied coldness.

"Arrange for my departure," I said bitterly, as Boyd re-entered with a letter. "I have, it would seem, outstayed my welcome," and I wept.

"My mother never yet insulted a guest," said he hotly. "Yet, Lady Clifford, had you her provocation, I doubt your showing equal patience."

"What is the contention?" said I. "Are others' sins to light on me? Let me answer for myself alone."

"Then answer *that*," said he, throwing on to the table a thick sealed letter, in Sergius' writing, addressed to me, and a half folio sheet, which had been wrapped round it, written to his wife.

"It is probably an enclosure from Sir Burleigh," I affirmed, hoping it might prove so, as the lad's eyes were half aflame with honest wrath for his mother; and in this hope, defying augury, I broke the seal, he watching lynx-like. There were several folded sheets, closely writ, chiefly of political import; yet here and there a sentence of affection, which seemed, as it was, irrepressible.

"It is political," said I, offering it for his perusal, and carelessly withdrawing it on his rejection. "We are used to talk much of the various plans formed, of the many movements planned, and he has penned this simply to the same purport. I wish you to read it."

"That I cannot," said he. "Put it on the fire, Lady Clifford, for God's sake! Grant it nothing—why should she be angered? I will say 'tis from Sir Burleigh—that I have seen it—which is true enough."

"You can say what you will," said I, angrily, "I have no cause for concealment."

The pine knots still burnt on the hearth—

though 'twas now May—but the peace and friendship had fled. I sat drooping and despondent over them, feeling that in this harsh climate of suspicion all the new health and strength must wither.

To my great joy, the Laird drove over to inquire for me, and finding me resolved on returning with him made but little demur.

"Stellarig will be glad to get ye again," said he, pleased with my eagerness to come back, "though nane quite expect ye, since ye were so set against it before."

I sought Lady Kilmarnock for farewell. She was cold and distant. I thanked her—though my blood boiled with indignation at her baseless anger—for all she had done for me. She contemptuously rejected my thanks, saying she would have done as much for anyone needing it; and so each obscured the light of the other under the bushels of angry jealousy and disdainful wrath at injustice.

"None expect ye," again warned Stellarig, "sae if a' be not smooth and dainty, ye hae but yoursel' to blame."

"Be smoothness, daintiness, far from me," I muttered, "so I may again be with those who love me. Charity is cold—it freezes even while

aiding," and when we reached Stellarig I went upstairs, unannounced, to our rooms.

The fire was black out. At a table littered with papers, dispatches, and gazettes, a council of war had, 'twas evident, been held. The whole place looked like a barrack—coats, hats, swords were on all the chairs, bottles and glasses on the wide window-seat. Its forlorn and disreputable appearance, after the trimness of "Muirhaig"—which was the name of the Lodge I had been staying at—was very conspicuous. Passing on to the inner room, the bed was unmade, the toilet in disorder.

"Send Saunder," said I, in dismay, as the Laird stood grinning at my discomfiture; "and do you, if you would be kind, bring some wood for a fire to brighten this cheerless den."

"Den!" said he, "is that yere hame-coming? Yes, I will aid ye. A Laird to licht fires, a Duchess for ae chamermaid."

Saunder soon appeared, and leaving him in possession, I repaired, though tired, to the garden, wandering up and down the sunny alleys disconsolate.

"Shall I never see them again?" I sighed, impatiently, this deferring of our meeting, after the long journey, affecting me unduly, as though they delayed.

Presently I heard footsteps, entering from the sea-gate. 'Twas Sir Burleigh. After him came the little Laird, followed by a fisher-lad laden with fresh-caught fish. Then Sergius came in, looking grave and troubled, as though the wickedness of a world he could not set right, weighed in his mind. This procession passed me unseeing, and entered the house silently.

I followed at a distance, and again won up the stairs. There was now a bright fire, the room redd up and trim. Beside the fire stood Sir Burleigh, having taken up a *Gazette*. Sergius had seated himself at the table and was mending a pen.

"Announce me," said I to Saunder, whom I met outside the door, and impassively he flung it open, as at a reception, announcing, as though it were a well-conned lesson, "Her Grace the Duchess of Denzillac."

Sergius started; Sir Burleigh let the *Gazette* flutter into the fire. Both seemed incredulous of having heard aright, when I entered and courtesied, laughing, anticipating I know not what of welcome.

"It is her!" said Sir Burleigh. "See, my dear, we are surprised; I meant writing to you. Why, Nell, what a faded, frightened Duchess! My dear, you look worse than when you went

away. I am glad to see you, but you had better stayed awhile longer at Muirhaig. Did Porteous give you leave to come?"

"I was tired of it, sir."

I sat down, having bowed to Sergius, whose surprise seemed to rivet him to his seat.

"Well," said Sir Burleigh, with a trifle more warmth, though to me it still sounded freezingly, "you are the better of your visit, I hope?"

"Yes," said I, passively, looking at him with some dread, for which I could not account. I was cold, and trembled with an apprehension, vague and terrible, of having passed for ever from his heart; his tone was altered and strange. Shivering, I drew my fur-lined travelling. cloak around me; this cold and frozen welcome seemed at once to renew languor and weakness It was inexplicable. I looked round; Sergius had silently withdrawn.

"Porteous tells me," said Sir Burleigh, his hands trembling—a sign with him of extreme anger—"that you were on bad terms with Lady Kilmarnock, inasmuch as you persisted in corresponding with Sergius, openly so far as writing and receiving letters went. Now, I am not fool enough to blame him. He regards you no more than just as a friend; but am I to be disgraced everywhere by your d——d folly? Are you to

come and go, plan and live, write and receive letters, all outside of me or my approval? How—since this has been tried and found to fail, in at least my happiness—if I give you your liberty formally, release you from the shadow of my control? This I meant to write and offer you, but since you've come, best offer and settle it at once."

"I will discuss nothing," said I, "till I have dined; then, sir, you may disclose this remarkable plan, either in writing, as intended, or by word of mouth, and it shall be considered."

"It shall so," said he. "It has been considered. I will have no duchess who deems it her lot in life to disgrace me; since you have been gone I have so decided."

"I would not, were I you," said I, scornfully; "but for the present I decline discussion. It is ill talk between a full man and a fasting."

He again took up the *Gazette*, and, seating himself opposite, read it with calm, vindictive patience, whilst I basked in the genial warmth of the fire, too thoroughly amazed and scornful to be unhappy, at this earthquake, avalanche.

A Duke and a Duchess!

"Let," thought I, "the humble, the unhappy, the poor in this world's goods, glance in on this picture. Favour is deceitful, beauty vain. So

might Anne Boleyn have sat, mute, unrealizing, under the angry eyes of the tyrant Henry." I took up the Memoirs of De Comines, and soon become absorbed in the history of the Duke of Gueldres, more absorbed than Sir Burleigh in his *Gazette*, who presently put it down and went to the writing-table.

"Is that," thought I, closing the book on my finger and looking round, as he bent grimly over his writing, "is that the *acte d'accusation* or the death-warrant? *He* is thoroughly in earnest. What has put him upon this?" Presently he had to transfer his task to a smaller table, for in these poorly-furnished rooms was only one of any size, and that Saunder waited to place the dinner on.

I went within and, after some unpacking, found the blue camlet robe I had worn at the farm—unruffled, trim, with its neckerchief of fine lace. In this I dressed myself, resolved that in nothing would I be obliged to him, now.

From the mirror looked out once again the calm, untroubled face of seventeen, which had not, as since, weighed the world and found it wanting. I remembered that, wherever he might be, I had a friend in M'Causland. I resolved to spare the formal annunciation of my putting away. In an unreasoning way I seemed as it was not

strange to me, this threat of a separation ; perhaps in his first tone, his greeting, something foreboding an intense change was evidenced—but why—why? I smoothed the stiff unchanging folds of my blue robe, which I had put on by that instinct in material things we evidence by wrapping a cloak around us if the sky is cloudy. He might by this see that I did not fear the return to obscurity; that I was indifferent, not to his wrath, but to its material consequences—loss of wealth, luxury.

Still weak and easily affected, the cruelty of this sudden judgment struck me less than its justice. How long he had shown mercy to me—how long! To him, perchance, 'twas the utmost limit of a long probation of pain and forbearance. All judgment falls on the judged suddenly. Through life we live in knowledge and fear of death ; yet to all death is sudden, to the aged no less than to the young. Sudden as this seemed, 'twas none the less certain. He had wearied of me, resolved on this separation. This pretext, slight as it was, showed him eager to catch at straws. It did not in the least trouble me in idea, this resuming of humble life, for I felt that with life now I had but little to do.

Kilmarnock dined with us; he looked very

troubled, and I knew it was on my account, and was grieved for him. Sir Burleigh surveyed me grimly.

"What is this *coup de théâtre?*" said he.

"Of that you can inform me at your leisure," I replied, "since I am ignorant of it."

"I mean your dress," said he.

"It is blue camlet, sir."

* * * * * *

"So you are going to defy me," said he, when, our guest gone, we resumed our station by the fire; "go back to your humble farm ways; find another duke to be fooled into wedding you."

"What I do is immaterial once we are parted—to you at any rate. Take back your ring; I will not wait for the slow heartbreak of legal mummery. Marry who you will; this dukedom has transformed you to a devil. The release, the benefit of parting will be to me incalculable, blessed."

"By —— you have all the spirit and resolution of that scoundrel, Philip Rohan—a proper Duchess of Denzillac."

"Do you hear, sir, I have no wish to be Duchess of Denzillac—you are mad with your dukedom." In a passion at this reflection on my

good sense, I forgot momently that to get warm was the worst possible taste, and was silent.

"That is right," said he; "freeze back into the haughtiness of that proper villain, Colonel Rohan."

"Sir," said I, "he seemed a villain of various moods. I have no objection to say amen to a commination on them at any other time; at present Philip Rohan is out of the running."

"He has a d——d good representative. As he would put on his oldest uniform for a duel, so you have chose—'tis an instinct—to put on the farm gown to defy me."

In much disturbance at this heredity of villainy, this unutterable parsimony, which so sharply accentuated the vices of reckless duelling and studied defiance, he paced the room, suddenly stopping, furious.

"I have resolved on a separation," said he. "'Tis not to be thought—beauty or no—that so long as you go your own daring and headstrong way, that a dukedom can be shared by you as the price of an unwilling affiance, a stray caress, a cold companioning, careless indifference to my wishes. God knows I have borne with you enough, have abjectly appealed to your mercy, justice, caprice; have taken at your hands, stone for bread; have forgiven, believed, hoped, loved

enough; now I will try separation. Perhaps, when convinced by absence that you have lost solid advantages for mere glistening nothings, you may come humbly back, and, taking your proper station, all will be well. If not, if resentment resolve you on a lifelong parting, you shall not complain of a niggard spirit in any settlement you may wish. I will meet you with open hands."

At this I looked up with that honest scorn for mere wealth which is the portion of youth untroubled by poverty or want.

"Do not vex me," said I, "with foolish words. To-morrow you may search sea and land, yet will not find me; to-night I will rest and think. Take back, meantime, your ring. When you have found the kind and constant helpmate you crave, it is there to re-bestow. For the rest, I want nothing of you."

Placing the ring on the *Gazette*, which lay beside him, I resumed my reading, not in appearance only. The Duke of Gueldres' cruel and parricidal strife, the enormities of which he was guilty, proved to me that such men were not to be restrained by any tie, any kinship; that for years might lie dormant the seeds of an evil ambition, awaiting but the influences of time, opportunity, to grow and bear its deadly fruit. It was a cruel story, in it I merged mine. My Duke of Gueldres—less

guilty, with more provocations, it may be, but as cruel, as resolute—sat opposite. All the invincible resolution, the steel-like courage of my nature was aroused. Kindness could melt, affection move; but to the mere material terrors, the worst and dearest worldly losses, I was adamant. Presently he rose and resumed his writing—long lists of figures, elaborate, uneven. It was cruel work for him, and was, I surmised, some calculation of his fortune, with a view to an equitable adjustment of my portion. Saunder coming in to mend the fire, calmly and unseen dropped a slip on my book, while apparently snuffing a candle, on the low mantel near. 'Twas from Sergius.

"For God's sake," it said, "bear with him. He has had some ill letters from France—enough to madden him. All will be well if you are patient."

This I put on the fire as I warmed my hands. Then, speaking to the labouring scribe, said coldly, "Sir, I may, I suppose, have my few diamonds?"

"Ah, Helen," said he, throwing down his pen with a wistful and relieved look, which went to my heart, "you have but to ask and have. I wish to be just. Would you walk on gold, the way should be paved with it as far as I could do it."

"That, sir, is no ambition of mine," said I, resuming my book.

"Ambition is God's curse," he muttered wearily, setting down his figures. "But for it I was happy. Now I am wrecked, ruined—yet it must be. My God, Helen, can you bear to see me so miserable and utter no word?"

"Put me down," said I severely, "for all the unentailed pictures, 'tis likely the new woman—Duchess—will not care for them."

"I do not know which are entailed," said he moodily, "but the whole may go to you, Verney willing. I will compound with him for them."

"Helen," said he presently, as I steadily read on. I would not look up.

"Helen! my God! can you only attend when it is a question of gain?"

"We have no other relations now," said I. "If it is not a money question 'tis none of my business."

"Ask then, madam, and at once, for what else your avarice craves?"

"'Tis but a trifle," said I; "then, granted or refused, cease to mar the quiet of my reading. Write me a line of farewell. Do not sign it Denzillac—he has never been my friend. When we are parted 'twill remind me of your goodness to me."

"That is not hard," said he grimly, drawing a sheet of hand-wove rough-edged folio paper to him, and resolutely commencing.

"The death warrant!" I set my teeth hard. If he could write that—farewell indeed. That I would never forgive, through a thousand years of expiation. I ruffled the leaves of my book. No fixed regard should urge him on, or piteous shrinking withhold him. In half an hour he had writ but the one word, "Helen." It stood alone on the wide blank sheet—a spectre staring on him from the past; a presence the next stroke of the pen would for ever banish from his life. His eyes were fixed on it; troops of hurrying memories seemed to absorb his thoughts. The present was far away. The past rose before him. His long protection and tender care for me—the privileged favourite, scribe, secretary. He looked up once, seeing, doubtless, as I sat by the hearth, the quiet blue-robed figure; of the farm; of the study, Verney's ally; M'Causland's pride. Thinking all this, my own eyes were dim with tears. A thousand acts of kindness, affection, rose to my mind, at thought of which I sobbed aloud, covering my face with my hands.

"God's curse light on me!" said he, throwing

down the pen, "if ever I write a lie that would send us apart. Helen!"

"I will not come."

"By —— that's like a woman. You have conquered, yet you must trample on me."

"It serves you right."

"It does so; yet if you was served right you would not be here."

"Here is not so very desirable," say I mutinously, closely clasped in his arms.

* * * * * *

"I had my journey to Muirhaig for my pains," said Doctor Porteous, coming in the third day of my return, and finding me prinked and trimmed up for dinner in anything but invalid case. I declined any more prescribing, but asked him to dine with us; whereat Sergius, who came in presently and found him there, did not seem over pleased.

"Sir Burleigh in Edinburgh!" said the doctor. "'Tis likely he will get too well known there, but there is little to fear. Our Provost is a right man; I have dined with him much of late."

Then he bustled downstairs to see Stellarig, who had just come in. Sergius, with a look of relief, came and stood beside me.

"I am not envious," said he, "I should like

him to dine with the Provost to-night. It is hard we should have strangers here, when 'tis the only rest or peace one has."

Presently Porteous bustled in again.

"I am sent for very pressingly," said he; "so if you, milady, will pardon me—exigencies of my profession—I will go."

"Certainly," said I; "we must hope for your coming at another time."

With gracious adieu, he went. Sergius instantly took my hand and kissed it.

"Thus," said he, "one sees the sea—if unfretted by obstacles, how calm! how majestic! as I meant to be; if opposed, how it dashes over the barrier! I am glad he has gone."

"He has been looking for me at Muirhaig," said I, "but I want no physician; I am too happy to be again with those who—who——

"Love you," suggested he, laughing. "That is precisely my case. When I saw Porteous in here 'twas as much as I could do not to warn him away in those words, on my own score."

We were laughing at this, for we laughed at very little when free—as was seldom the case—from all pressing anxiety.

By firelight the room, which was large and not ill-shaped, furnished with its superb pictures, an air of comfort and ease given to it by

use, and made more handsome by its inhabitants, looked no ill-abiding place.

Kilmarnock, bending his handsome head near to me to look at a rose-diamond on my wrist, seemed supremely happy. "And sure," thought I, "he works over hard, and is entitled to an hour's holiday. Let him spend it in foolish admiration of me, if such amuse him most" It was therefore pure philosophy that smiled back to him when he rehearsed the old simile of eyes and diamonds, and looked at both, professing to find it hard to tell which shone brighter by firelight.

"Wear this ring for me," said he presently, taking one from his breast-pocket, carelessly wrapped in paper. "I got it made in Paris for you, after an hundred stratagems to get the size of your finger. At last I succeeded—so. Is it a good fit?"

"It is a fit," said I, "but not fitting. Milord, you should not. I do not need any token to remind me of your goodness to me. This is too costly."

"Let me be judge," said he. "I am not a poor man, and was I to deny myself bread, I would——"

"Give, and receive a stone!"

We both started. Lady Kilmarnock, who was

the speaker, stood within the doorway, having crossed the anteroom unheard, and been witness of this gift.

"Will," said she, as we stood up to receive her, "this is very pretty fooling. Take my cloak. Lady Clifford, I came to see was you yet recovered. Doctor Porteous brought me in his chariot. I bid him tell you I would wait on you which he has manifestly forgot."

"You should not come into these sea-fogs," said Kilmarnock, hotly, "I told Porteous so."

"Come, come, Will," said she, "sea-fogs never yet hurt me. 'Tis only of late you have thought so."

Unluckily, in extending my hand to her, after a formal courtesy, the ring, an exceedingly costly one, which I had not intended to accept, flashed on it.

"'Tis pretty," said she, retaining my hand and coldly surveying it. Then, drawing it off, she placed it amidst a number of well-worn gems on her own hand. "That is its right place," said she, while Sergius, pale with anger, and distrusting his own self-command, said nothing.

"I am happy to see it there," said I, indifferently. "Will your ladyship dine with us?"

"No," said she, "my ladyship is due in Edinbro' to a seventh cousin of the Provost's."

"Auchinleck?" said Kilmarnock. "As that is so, and you have doubtless news to exchange with Lady Clifford, I will walk on awhile and meet you there." He abruptly left the room.

"This is a cruel meeting," said she, "after six months of absence. Scarce a greeting—a word. Dare you tell me you are guiltless in this, Lady Clifford?"

"We are both guiltless," said I, indignantly. "Milord means no more by this than friendship warrants. He has been my guest for long periods and seen fit to grant me his friendship. I protest against this insult to him. For myself, I disdain to be offended by such crude misapprehension. Apart from that your ladyship is welcome, as you must know."

"I thank you," said she, with a courtesy. "I shall sup at Edinbro' with my friends. I am glad to see you so much better in health. Should Muirhaig air be advised for you again, it is at your service, for I shall not be there."

With another sweeping courtesy, and tears in her eyes, for which I sincerely pitied her, she was for going, when Sir Burleigh and Stellarig came in.

Strange to say Sir Burleigh had an aversion to Milady Kilmarnock, for which there was no cause; for apart from her little jealousy, that I

alone was cognizant of, she had a friendly feeling for him. Had Sergius been discreet this would have extended to me ; even now her sense of justice partly exonerated me from blame. Then, again, the unstudied warmth of milord's friendship for me persuaded her that, from caprice, I was resolved on her unhappiness. Finding it useless to combat these cobweb prepossessions, which swept away would but recreate themselves, I was but too glad that gratitude for her late kindness to me made Sir Burleigh's tone cordial now.

"Ah!" said he, heartily, "I am very glad to see you, milady. Sure you are not for going, but will dine with us! 'Tis unlucky. I met Sergius going post to Edinbro'; he said he had business, nor would not return."

"Yes," said she, "we dine together there at the Laird of Auchinleck, my fourth cousin, seventh cousin to Lord Provost Stuart. Milord left me with Lady Clifford; but I will take Saunder and my own man as escort, and the road is safe enough."

"I will come," said Sir Burleigh, looking, however, anything but pleasant at the prospect. An offer which was politely declined. So, after various compliments and thanks for her hospitality to me, she went off, having, though

a good woman, made two people mutely miserable. I could not tell Sir Burleigh, nor fail to think of the unhappiness caused by a jealous spirit to those it most loves. In silence and languor I listened to Sir Burleigh's cheering news from Edinbro', knitting the while into my work anxiety and sorrow for Sergius.

* * * * *

To show unto jealous women what may be a likely result of their wilful misconstruction, I would barely record, that anger gave Kilmarnock so severe headache that next day he was unfitted for any business, and was brought by Sir Burleigh to our rooms for quiet and treatment. For awhile he stayed with him, reading to him various items from the *Gazette*; then, wearying, went out, shifting his self-elected nursing to my shoulders. Milady K. had returned to Muirhaig.

"Nell," said he, in the anteroom, "let him rest. 'Tis his fourth cousin's dinner has half-poisoned him, and milady has a tongue with a tang; she doubtless has found fault with his setting off without her. Altogether, I don't like his looks; and we cannot spare his counsels, so take care of him."

With this parting injunction he went off, and

returning to the invalid I was shocked at the pallor and dejection of his face.

"You must not write," said I, taking the pen from him—for he was essaying a letter. "Sir Burleigh gave you into my keeping. I order you to close your eyes—not to talk, nor think. Our best head must not ache."

"'Tis my heart aches," said he wearily. "Helen, I wished myself dead last night, and out of it all. There is no hope for me, I might better worship an idol—and then to be senselessly assailed, and cause you grief."

"Consider her grief that assailed you," said I severely. "Grant it hard for her to enter into so remote a possibility as that I only feel friendship for you, whom she loves. I am not blaming you, yet feel most for her."

"You do, do you?" said he bitterly. "Then I do not—assure you."

At this man-like assertion I smiled, but not so that he saw me.

"'Tis a hard case," said I, "that all crying children may not have the moon; yet, possessing it, they might still be unhappy on other counts. Sergius, you are getting grey."

"With grief!" he sighed, yet in a less lachrymose tone:

'To the boy Cæsar take this grizzled head.'"

"Nay," said I, "less heroic treatment is in store for it. Bethink you of Æsop's story of the man with two wives—one of whom plucked out the grey, the other the brown hairs"—and, giving a sharp twitch, I landed the grey hair I complained of on a gazette, and passed it him with a courtesy This, and the surprise, effectually put an end to his heroic self-pity, his dreams of Antony, his likening me to Egypt; he became reasonable. I begged his pardon for the cruelty of the cure, and he opened his eyes half angrily; then smiled, as, smoothing back the long, brown locks, I bade him sleep under that mesmeric touch. Whether 'twas my command or no, he went to sleep; probably he had been too vexed and troubled over the silly scene of last night to sleep much. Be that as it may, his calm intellect reasserted its sway on his handsome features—the trouble and pallor passed from them—and, sitting silently knitting, I mused over this singular friendship, which was love, controlled on both sides by intellect—not "*sans ailes*," but with its wings folded.

Awaking with a start, and apologising for having dozed, he looked around, and, not seeing me, concluded me gone out. I had but gone to the window to look on the white, curled waves of the Firth dashing upon the sands. In the

distance, yet so far out as to be scarce discernible, was a boat. All the fishers were away, and none expected till night. As this water-waif rose and sank, I seemed to see, for a moment, someone stand up.

"'Tis imagination," thought I; then a trembling swept over me as I thought of Casimir. Could it be him, coming openly, in full daylight? 'Twas too rash. I looked round. Sergius, spite of his apology, was dozing again. Unable to alone endure the surprise and agitation of this conjecture, I called to him, and he came to the window.

"What is amiss?" said he. "My dear, think no more of last night's disquiet."

"'Tis a crueller disquiet, milord. That rash boy is perilling his life. Oh! for night to fall—for instant darkness! Oh! he will be seen—taken!"

Tears burst from my eyes, obscuring the near waves, the distant boat.

Kilmarnock's keen eyes had already seen the sail. "It may be but a Fife fisher," said he. "In any case, Helen, granting it to be him, madness is under Heaven's special protection."

"What can he do?" said I, "he may be pursued. How can you cruelly misjudge him?" I leaned back with closed eyes and fainting

limbs, unable to watch the slow progress of the boat, to endure the rack of suspense, feeling his capture imminent.

"He is in," said Sergius at length, sullenly. "He has met Sir Burleigh. They are coming. Helen, for God's sake, why should he see the power he still has over you? Retire till you are calmer. You are his very slave."

"I am not," said I rallying, though with a choked voice and hands that trembled. "Can I see him in danger and not feel it?"

"He is in no danger," said he. "I wish to God he was dead, or that I was. 'Tis you have made us enemies. He treats you inhumanly, and I cannot bear it."

"He does not," said I fiercely. "Can he help that I am a fool? How do we know what distresses he has endured since we saw him?"

"The distresses of a hundred partings, a hundred farewells from French dames; of seasickness, perchance, of some spray dashing over him. I am going. I will not be made wretched further. Distresses—Denzillac! To be made king of the whole world I would not have his heart, his conscience, nor be that puppet of his ambition—Stuart."

"Who calls?" Stuart, on the outer threshold, heard but his name of all this, and stumbled in

—brown, drenched, and haggard. "Been two days at sea," said he, clasping Kilmarnock's unwilling hand. "Will see you again"—as he went.

"Helen, I am back again. My darling, I have good news this time."

"Where is Sir Burleigh?" said I in bewilderment, having been sure they entered together.

"At the Firth side, said he. "What do I know? This is a proper reception. I am too happy to quarrel, however. Nell, the Macdonald's, the Camerons of Lochiel, Stuart of Ardross, Murray of Broughton, all are mine now. A kiss for each clan. Oh, my dearest, every wave the boat leaped over I counted but a step to you. Are you glad to see this wet and weary Hielander?"

This joy and elation could not be withstood. Presently he went off to his room, and Stellarig coming in decreed a feast, dwelling with peculiar pleasure on the benefits of haggis to worn-out travellers, especially such as had been by sea. We dined downstairs. We heard of the storm-tossed Hebrides, the driving back of the French war ship, the swift run of the Doutelle—a thousand swift and sparkling words passed lightly over perils, gave rose-hues to hopes. We applauded, listened, half worshipped—even Kil-

marnock relented. The magic by which all this was accomplished by one unaided man; the skill, courage, clearsightedness, devotion, unsparing self-sacrifice, would have won over his bitterest enemies to homage, to admiration, to love. Stellarig forgot the haggis, even Saunder was moved; instead of filling the Prince's glass he knelt, and, in irrepressible emotion, kissed his hand.

"Get up, you fool!" said Sergius, between his teeth, so harshly that there was a silence.

"Sir," said Saunder, with a sort of sob, "I am a Scot, forgive me!" and, with his hand to his eyes, he left the room.

We all set upon Sergius, who seemed glad to have the attention diverted to himself, I thought. The spell was broken, the talk became general. Presently, pleading that this should be a holiday—for Kilmarnock proposed a council—they all went to our rooms for cards and coffee.

Sir Burleigh engrossed Stuart. He was eager for all minute details of the chase by the English ship. Kilmarnock came to me.

"Keep your eyes off his face," said he roughly, "he is tanned to a Red Indian."

"If he has the skin, you have the heart of a savage," said I. "You have made poor Saunder

miserable. See, do not be unkind any more, I am looking at you."

I repented this concession; my eyes closed involuntarily. Though the features were calm, Kilmarnock's face was appalling livid with repressed passion, with lips that twitched, eyes withdrawn, and dull lowering brows. Fearing some outbreak—for the most harmless word might fall on a prepossession of fury as a spark on a magazine of powder—I went over to Sir Burleigh and sat beside him, listening, too, to the story of the Doutelle's escape. Kilmarnock quitted the room. I watched him go with distinct relief, yet with sorrow for him, which made the clearly-told story of the Doutelle hazy. I left the two talkers and wrote a line to Sergius:

"Come back again, or if not, forgive me!"

This Saunder took him. Saunder was still red-eyed, and only half repetrified to his usual marble. Kilmarnock returned after awhile, calmer, yet still dangerous, the waves of wrath gone down, a heavy sea running. I scarce knew what to say to him; my silence seemed to cause him some relenting.

"I am not a tiger," said he, "that you need sit in fear of my talons."

"Who need fear," said I, "when you transfer the stripes to your friends? One cannot

have more than the cat and its skin. Is it peace?"

"Yes," said he sullenly.

"Then the misery of an ill night is spared me."

"And me also," said he, completely softened.

"Dear, you are an angel!" whispered I, anticipating his usual compliment—at which he laughed.

Unluckily a whisper carries much further than 'tis meant, whether the sound or the sense, and an immediate silence from Stuart repaid this. Sir Burleigh, who had been attending only to him, looked up in surprise.

"'Tis Helen's knitting-pins," said he, noting the slight noise they made, which alone was audible. "My dear, put by your knitting; 'tis holiday to-night. One would think you knitted for daily bread."

In vain, on my complying, he again lent an eager attention to Stuart. He professed he had been tedious and had no more to say; begged us to remember his long journey and present fatigue, and, bidding us severally good rest, retired; escorted to his room with obsequious attention by Stellarig.

"Helen," said Sir Burleigh severely, disappointed of the rest of the Doutelle's run, "you might remember that the lad is touchy, as are all

Highlanders, and put away your weaving and spinning while he is speaking. He is tired, too."

"Silence is golden," said I, winding my worsted, "he has talked enough."

"That is for me to judge," was the angry reply. "One might think by the welcome accorded him he had fallen among pirates instead of friends."

Sergius bade us goodnight and withdrew—his departure was scarce noticed. Sir Burleigh retired, perturbed and angry. I looked round the now empty room, and wished they all had the calm unfatiguing presence of the Titians.

A slant of moonlight from a half-undrawn curtain fell across one of the pictured faces, and, disinclined for sleep, I stole quietly down the stairs and out into the stillness of the June night. The sea murmured outside the walls with a summer gentleness. Inside were unpruned roses, straggling pinks, feathers of white lilac, wall-flowers, showing well in the moonlight, liberal of their sweet odours; the turf borders were dewy, the shrubs wet and glistening. No want of order was shown in this soft light; all looked beautiful. Wandering here and there I came to the dark pathway, cut through a hazel thicket, that led to the tennis court—a gruesome place

at night. Twice I drew back. Ivy twined round the stems of the alder-trees, which, like slim sentinels, kept back the encroachments of the bush ; the whispering leaves kept up their unceasing mystery of speech in the silence.

"What do you say," thought I, "that night and day you talk? 'Tis not alone of yourselves, for you are calm and at rest. Is it of the varying humankind who live near—the proud, the passionate, the ambitious? Do you forebode joy, or mourn over coming grief?" Musing thus, I forgot the dimness of the path, and went on over its soundless moss till I heard voices, when I stopped. "Surely," thought I, "at near midnight, though we are unquiet folk, we yet follow the fashion of quieter mortals, and sleep. Is it perhaps treachery, a surprise? I listened, standing well back in the thicket. The voices drew near ; one was Dupont's.

"Sir," said he, and I saw that he spoke to Stuart, "be advised to your ultimate good. I have kept a strict and strait watch, and it is as I say."

"I cannot believe it," said Stuart, "I, who bade you report, cannot credit my own agent."

"That is, sir, no uncommon phase of mind when one wishes facts to be other than they are—yet it is true."

"What?" thought I, curious as a listening magpie. "'Tis some Doutelle news, which I may have for the asking to-morrow."

I knew the rules of honour which forbade listening, but could not, without a commotion, get away—almost an *esclandre* 'twould seem to Dupont for a lady to be outdoor at this time, and Stuart would be vexed too. So, *en couvert*, I stayed; and listening, my hair raised itself, quill fashion.

"You French monster!" thought I of Dupont; who took the innocent acts of every-day life of a man and a woman, steeped them in hell's own colouring, and offered them to his master.

Truth to say, Stuart's very soul seemed to sicken as this wretch-priest wove up his iniquitous story—suggesting, imputing, even sighing and pausing, till the fierce jealousy of his listener demanded more and yet more proof. Hidden close, 'twas not the night dew from the dripping trees that poured down my face, but the agonies of fear, of terror. Sometimes they spoke in French, the language, thought I, of devils. Sergius asleep, myself here, were described as having been seen by Dupont to depart through the sea-gate, after the long tale was ended.

"I cannot bear it," said Stuart, hurrying from

this base spy, and baser liar, "one word will settle it." He went on to the house, Dupont following; I too, careless now of concealment, my steps unheard on the mossy pathway.

"Saunder," said he, meeting him, "we have kept you up late, you may now steek the door."

"Milady is oot yet," said Saunder; "but I dinna mind awaitin' her leddyship, she aye steeks it carefu' eneuch."

"Take this to milord," said Stuart, carelessly passing him a folded paper; "but if he be asleep 'tis no matter."

"He is oot on the links," said Saunder, "I will tak' it him there."

"No matter," said Stuart, "'twill wait till morning," and, without looking at Dupont, he was for going upstairs. "'Tis true," he said, throwing the words to him as he went, "you have done well."

Dupont shrunk away, as unlike a well-doer as could well be. I entered, and, giving Stuart time to gain his room, went into ours.

In an agony of shame, of fury, I closed the door of the dressing-room. In the room beyond, Sir Burleigh lay asleep. No sound could reach him as, raking together the embers of the fire, relighting the candles, pausing not to think of after-consequences, bent now on vengeance—

for which, had he arisen and demanded it, I would have given my very soul to Lucifer—I drew the writing-table near the fire, that the brightest light of both might fall on my paper, and wrote to Kilmarnock.

"Dear friend," said I, "whom I love. Pity me, for I am struck down to the very dust. I am blinded, deafened, poisoned. Hope of vengeance alone keeps me alive to write this to you. Do not ask more than the name of the author of this agony. I am not mad, only that I feel I can yet trust in you. If you turn from me, hell begins for me on earth—all are devils. The vile priest, Dupont, has vilely calumniated me. Stuart has listened—believed; that I will never forgive. Let some sharp judgment fall on Dupont—how, what, devise yourself. You are my friend, feel for me—I am heartbroken."

Seeking out Saunder I bade him carry this to milord. "If it is to Edinburgh," said I, my teeth clenching.

"He is on the links yet," said Saunder, hurrying off.

Unable to return—maddened, thirsting for vengeance—I followed this fleet messenger. I crept, Indian-fashion, behind him, my blood boiling, tingling with thirst for blood; longing for a dirk, and that I might strike Dupont to the heart.

On the links, the bright moonlight illumining his tall, slender figure, Kilmarnock stood watching the racing, impetuous waves.

The scene was lovely. Over the quiet sky summer lightning played. The wide moorland stretched behind, the hills away to the right.

Saunder approached his master unheard. The cruelty of this message, disturbing the peace of Sergius, did not strike me. I felt that in him lay the power of vengeance for such a wrong as could not be forgiven.

Giving the note, Saunder fell back, while Sergius mechanically read it—re-read it.

"Who gave you this?" said he.

"Mileddy," said Saunder, "hersel'."

Sergius thought a moment; then, with such a sudden step that the well-trained Saunder stood back, he seized his arm.

"Saunder," said he, "I want Dupont out here. I want him now. He, it is likely, does not want me; so manage as you may."

He grasped his dirk, then, tearing the paper into minute fragments, cast it before an advancing wave, which carried it, perchance, to some storehouse of future vengeance against myself. I was careless of this; my eyes seemed like flames of fire as, presently, I saw Dupont advancing, followed by Saunder.

Kilmarnock had turned and walked away. The priest, unused to the rough shore, in haste and eager, pursued. Close by Sergius turned and faced him.

"Where is the chief?" said he, turning on Saunder in perplexity.

"Sir," said Kilmarnock, "it is likely you will find me chief enough."

"*Bête!*" said he. "Milord, I did not come out here at this hour to talk to you. You have a servant who is a fool!"

"Saunder's intelligence, though satisfactory enough, is not the question. I want two runners, Saunder" (this in Gaelic).

"Where is the Prince?" said Dupont advancing with menace; "if you are bent on conciliation this is your worst way."

"Conciliation for what? in God's name!" was the reply. "No, I am not bent on it; I thought, as the night was fine and the way clear, of inviting you, sir, to a walk."

"Sir, I decline. Sir, were I not a priest you should answer this insult hand to hand, as you yet shall, dearly."

He turned to retrace his way.

Over the soundless turf, meantime, had advanced the two runners, whose wild and eager

eyes seemed to sparkle, as they awaited the signal to seize Dupont.

"You are to go with these men," said Kilmarnock. "You are familiar, by report, with their customs. If, therefore, you fall into their displeasure, 'tis your own fault."

"For what is this outrage?" hissed Dupont.

"That," said Sergius, "is a *lettre de cachet*, unless, by-the-way, you can remember how you have offended."

Then, speaking in Gaelic, he gave the men their orders. Saunder, who stood near by, trembled, and the men, with drawn dirks, gave the astounded priest the first gentle intimation of their power over him, by a forcible seizure of his arms, and a long swing forward.

Struggling, shrieking, raving with fury, he endeavoured to throw himself down. One struck him, not gently, on the mouth, with the handle of his dirk; I heard the teeth sound on the metal. In a few minutes, but for the traces of a struggle on the sand, soon to be effaced by the advancing waves, they were lost to sight.

"You do not see, and you have not seen him," said Kilmarnock to Saunder, dismissing him, who returned indoors through the sea-gate.

Resuming his walk, I came forward, and as he drew near, knelt at his feet, embracing his knees.

"My dear," said he, raising me to his arms, "you should not be here Why did you concern yourself about the libel of this paltry priest? 'Tis likely he will get tired and rest in some ravine, or tire the scanty patience of his guards, with the same result. Nell, I have given them a discretionary power. There are no half measures with these wild clansmen. Doubtless Dupont will, in a very short time, finding it imperative, submit. He will shortly be fifty full miles away in a fastness, from which none but one used to it can find entrance or exit. There he may learn Lafitte's lesson, which 'twould have better befitted him to remember before."

"What was that?" said I.

"Lafitte," he answered, "had twenty years in the Bastile, for insulting Madame de Pompadour, and quite right too. What do such fellows do, as Hamlet says, crawling between heaven and earth, that have no more of manliness than to devise lies of women? My dear, think no more of it; had I heard him, my dirk should have taught him respect. Never mind that Stuart listened—a jealous man will stoop to any meanness; for to be jealous is a base want of faith. Yet I do not envy him, he will be torn to pieces; he has but devised a whip of scorpions for himself; now that the two actors are punished,

Helen, do not weep; it makes me, too, unhappy. To think that with all the will in the world to avenge you, I yet have to keep on terms with Stuart and Denzillac! Why will you not listen to me—leave them? Sure some asylum could be found where you would be happy." Involuntarily his arms tightened and trembled. "Muirhaig is open to you, my darling. There you have friends; even a respite from cruelty would be a distinct gain."

By this the sea, which had been encroaching silent and unseen, sent a long wave washing over our feet, startling even in the passion of hate and pain which burned in my heart against Stuart.

"Sergius," said I, "it is in vain that you counsel wisely. I cannot leave Sir Burleigh; but for the rest, I hate Casimir—hate him. The limit of my forbearance is reached. That he could credit, listen to, this vile French spy, yet not accord me a word in defence. I will never forgive him. 'Tis an indignity I have not deserved, nor will condone. For your help and sympathy, that is balm in Gilead. You have always been good to me. I do not deserve all the goodness you have shown. At that I must stop." Yet, as a grieved and dejected aspect came to his downbent face, I drew it to my

arms and kissed it. Then turning, went slowly in at the sea-gate, leaving him without on the rocks.

"Let Dupont," thought I, in a frenzy of renewed wrath, "chronicle that embrace, take it to his master. Sergius has a noble heart; but for his ready sympathy, unmistrusting help, the world to me were indeed a hell. Does that wretch sleep? Can sleep come to so base a traitor to every generous thought? Would he were here, that the sand-built castle of his French agent could be swept down by a wave of wrath and scorn." My hands clenched, every fierce and passionate thought urged to hate of one who could listen to so infamous libels and leave the utterer free and living, in proof that he believed them. "The limit of my long patience is reached. To-morrow——"

Choking anew with wrath, I held my desolate way within doors.

The fire in our rooms now blazed brightly and cheerfully; the utter darkness was within. I wasted no thought on Dupont; gratified, vengeance had evaporated like mountain mist, beneath which lay the grim skeleton of dead faith.

I seized my pen; that, without pauses, sighs, tears, could tell best my resolve. I wrote to

Stuart. Perchance his unbelief had made him as miserable as its discovery made me; but he had sought his pain—mine came to me as I wandered heedlessly in the summer night, never to cease. I wrote:—

"SIR,

"By accident, being abroad in the garden last night, I discovered you had employed, to watch me, a French spy.

"God knows, had any Hanover enemy of the basest, endeavoured to impute such an act to you, how much lower and viler would he have made himself appear! The admission comes from yourself. The tale of this wretch, though false with an utter falsity, you believed—believed! I can scarce pen the word on evidence so strained, twisted, contorted, that a man in possession of a grain of honest faith would have seen the intricate lie—as with our bodily eye we see a complicate web, wove for prey. You did not ask the evidence of your own heart, your own mind. You wished to prove me vile for the hungering of a miserable jealousy, the feeding of an insatiate cruelty, both which seem now and are, paramount over your once love. All love for you is now dead in my heart. Never again appear in my presence.

"That you may succeed in all your temporal affairs, and be happy, forgetting me, is the earnest wish of

"HELEN CLIFFORD."

Folding and sealing this, I put it aside, and with a weary and aching heart conjectured what his feeling would be on its receipt. I abandoned thought of writing to Sir Burleigh. To him all should be told.

'Twas now two o'clock, the fire had died out, the candles waned. I watched them one by one expire into their sockets, each like a life, a love—and anguish and weariness brought with them a troubled sleep.

Saunder coming in the morning to redd up the room awoke me. I gave him the letter to Stuart, and going within proceeded to divest myself of ornament, to bathe, and to dress in the snowy China silk, fine and soft as folds of muslin. I had the instinctive aversion of a Frenchwoman to misery in rags. Even mortal agony has its decencies, or Cæsar's mantle is no true witness.

"You look sweet as a musk-rose," said Sir Burleigh, surveying with approval the white robe as he came in to breakfast. "Kilmarnock and Casimir are to breakfast with us, remember."

"Sergius may," said I trembling, not with

fear, but anger, "but Stuart I have forbid to come here again. See him where else you may."

"Forbid him!" He turned slowly and fixed his eyes on my face. "Helen, what do you mean?"

"Sir, what I say, that I have forbid Casimir to come here to intrude into my presence. I hate him. Was he dead I should be happy."

"My dear, he is not like to die for an ill wish of yours. What is this new quarrel? Surely you have dreamed some ill of him. Now, be calm."

"I am calm enough," said I between my teeth. "I hope he may never be king. He is, as all his race, false, faithless."

"You had best stop." Sir Burleigh rose, anger contracting his straight brows. "You have one of your mad fits on, like your scoundrel father, and say you know not what."

"Then why seek to stop me?" said I, crushing my nails into the palms of my hands in the torture of speaking calmly. "Apex of such a triangle of villainy—husband, lover, father—how should I be other, better than I am? Nor will I try. I hate him," and walking away into the inner room I saw how fell a look hate and pain can bring to

the human face. My hair seemed to stand up; my face was colourless, save for the deep blue of my contracted eyes; my lips were convulsed, and moved without my will.

"This is frightful," said I, "but less hideous than the feeling it images, which yet I will not let go."

I sat down, pulseless as a stone, to all outward seeming. Troops of hurrying thoughts, black and bitter as hell, obscured my mind. The summer freshness from without stole round me unheeded. Presently Sir Burleigh entered.

"Come out!" said he peremptorily; "this madness has lasted long enough."

I rose, stupefied by pain into obedience, caring nothing to dispute trifles, following to the table.

"Helen," said he, "this frantic flying into extreme moods is so unlike you that I must suppose some serious cause for the present one, which I insist on your disclosing. If it be, as you appear to think, any great and tangible offence, rely on my resenting it for you. On the other hand, if you are in fault—as I will not quarrel lightly with Casimir for any mere whim—I shall send you to Muirhaig for a while, whether milady is there or no. With a couple of servants you can manage, and the business now pressing upon us will

claim all our attention. We cannot be slaves to a contentious woman's anger or sullenness. What is this business?"

"Sir," said I, anger awaking to a red glow, "seeing I am prejudged, you were best make no pretence of impartiality. Send me to Muirhaig. Gather any version of it you please from Casimir. I will say nothing."

"By ——!" said he, "I will have the whole truth from you. Tell me, and that instantly. What is it? Dupont libelled you, and he listened —believed. Well, that is Dupont's offence. For listening—was you not a listener? Abroad in the garden at night, eh?—at midnight. How dared you be there, when you should be asleep? I will not have you roam abroad in that dangerous garden. If Casimir is a fool and Dupont a knave, 'tis no news. All Frenchmen are so. 'Tis their orisons, the composing of calumny, and they are happy in proportion as they inflict misery on others. Priest or no priest, Saunder shall cudgel him soundly, or I will."

"Do not talk to me," said I, "your words ring in my ears. I am ill."

"Before God," said he, "this is a fine morning greeting! First you thrust a defiance into my hands. I have scarce mastered it when your d——d folly comes home to you in illness.

Haunting the garden-thickets at midnight! Dupont! D—— Dupont! Casimir is not the fool to believe a French priest. Do you think, trained at a Court, he is some rustic, swallowing Autolycus' ballads? His feigning to believe was some ruse of his own, though what it all amounts to is still a mystery to me. Speak no more of it, but come to breakfast. I have sent word to put off Sergius. Casimir, by your orders, is like to stop away. Pour me a cup of coffee; and, my dear, if you are to live in peace at Court, the less you listen to or feel these fables the better. Dupont will yet repent speaking ill of you. Do not weep. It was, doubtless, very grievous to you; but was you for a month at the French Court you would hear the hooting of these treason-owls everywhere, and take no more note of it than of the barn owls at the farm. I dare not harass Casimir now. The whole success of the cause depends on him. 'Tis likely Dupont's tale fell on unlistening ears. Perchance the poor lad was going over the muster-roll of the clans, and the old priest talked to the air. If you cannot forgive him, you shall go for awhile to Muirhaig; but I hope you will accept any submission he may make, remembering that he is not in fault."

"'The king can do no wrong,'" thought I

bitterly. The conflagration of anger burnt down to dull ashes, as dazed, ill, and miserable I sat gazing at this haughty and confident presence.

"Helen," said he, relentingly, on my silence, "you are a good girl, and never vexed me willingly; nor do I make light of your present trouble; but, on my soul, Casimir cannot be blamed. Granting the worst, that he did listen to Dupont, those rascal French would weave up a lie, would, for the moment, compel attention, 'til the sound thought, 'twas but a Frenchman,' came to one. He shall be packed home again. Come, my dear, be reasonable; do not be angry with me, anyhow. Dupont, rely on it, will not escape condign punishment. Was I a priest I would as soon meddle with a scorpion. 'Twas a wonder his folly went so far as to mention you even."

Immersed in this new wonder breakfast went on tranquilly, for him. Tired and thirsty I drank some coffee. But an hour gone, had it been poison, I would have gladly taken it. Now nature—refusing to entertain longer the alien, grief—recovered itself somewhat.

"You must rest." Sir Burleigh drew a gaunt sofa from the dressing-room, and arranging it carefully, to be free from draughts,

advised sleep, which, indeed, was stealing subtlely over me, whether I would or no. "We shall all be hard at work till dinner," said he, covering me with a plaid, "so you will be undisturbed." And locking the door of the anteroom as he went out, I felt the security of solitude and fell asleep. To deep and dreamless oblivion—restoring nature, healing the wounded heart—succeeded light and pleasant dreams, to be followed by a sad awaking, wherein the banishment of Casimir, so newly returned from dangers and toils, assumed an aspect of cruelty. The sun was setting. I retired to dress for the evening, and had just completed a careful toilette, when, making a great ado of unlocking the door of the anteroom, Sir Burleigh came in.

"Helen," said he, hurriedly, "some of the Doutelle's men—that's to say, an Italian and a French friend of Casimir's—dine here to-night. You can appear or not, as you please. I wish you would, but will not press it if you object."

"I have no objection," said I. "But do not forget we are here truly as Casimir's guests, nor arrange anything without his sanction."

"That will be all right," said he, carefully putting on his most modish wig and handsomest coat—while I was at the pains to entirely alter

my dress from the plain white to the sheeny pink, being never indifferent to the effect of a neat robe.

"Prove that e'er I dress myself handsome till thy return," the parting words of a lady to her lover, in some old play-book, I had often in old days teased Sandy McCausland with, now recurred to me. "Prove that I appear before you like misery in mourning," I thought bitterly of Stuart, putting on one gem after another.

"Helen," said Sir Burleigh, smiling, "my dear, in that bare, barrack-like room you will appear like some Court dame in a cottage—Juno in a thatched house."

"Then," said I, "take off that modish wig, sir, and laced coat. Sergius will be in Highland dress, Stellarig will have a plaid coat. Yet if you judge it too much, I will change it for a simpler robe."

"I do not judge it too much," said he, "and, after all, 'tis little art can do for you.''

"And that little is done," said I, smiling. "Like Adonis and the birds—

'He fed them with his looks—they him with berries.'"

"In effect," said he, "there is a good haunch of venison; better than berries, to my taste," and lending me his hand, we went downstairs, and entered the dining-room just as dinner was an-

nounced, and the rest of them assembled. The two new-comers were presented to me.

Hating foreigners just now for Dupont's sake, I yet could not forbear whispering to Sergius that he was outshone by the Italian, who looked as he had stepped from a picture, for handsomeness.

"An opinion he seems to reciprocate," said he, laughing.

The Frenchman was tall and gaunt, with warts on his face—an honest Breton sailor officer in command of the Doutelle, who had been Admiral of France.

Stuart, who was at a distance, I would not look at. The pain and sting of his treacherous espionage should be retorted on him somehow.

He, on his part, seemed calmly defiant; for I could not help, after awhile, glancing at him.

The men talked to one another, I to Sergius alone. They all ate hugely of venison, being hungry after their hard day's work without respite—the Italian not the least. None of them seemed in the slightest to remember—

> "Put a knife to thy throat when thou dinest with princes,
> If thou be a man given to appetite."

The Frenchman put his knife to his mouth instead, and when, at the conclusion of dinner, we all rose together, and I made my courtesy

and retired, Kilmarnock presently came with a message from Sir Burleigh to excuse him awhile, as the French Admiral was giving him an account of the loss of his ship—as such he described its having been chased and driven back. After giving his message he lingered.

"'Tis cruel," said he, "and not safe, to leave you in these remote rooms alone. Unknowingly to yourself — to any — you were obnoxious to Dupont, who, I have since surmised, was an emissary of James, employed to create a break with Casimir. How do we know what other malign influences are at work? Here stairs, corridors, separate you from any chance of aid—do not consent to be left alone."

The earnestness of his tone alarmed me, so that involuntarily I glanced round.

"To-morrow," he continued, "I will get a dog to range the grounds at night. To-night I have put a man of my own clan on watch beneath the windows of your rooms, well armed. Yet I do not like to leave you—there is some uncanny feeling; it overcame me as I entered and saw you sitting there, radiant in your diamonds. Helen, you are not safe. The nearer we approach success, the more obnoxious has Sir Burleigh's dukedom become; that is falsely ascribed to your influence. Other rumours fix on you as

author of most destructive and pernicious counsels. Could they be met and combated singly 'twere very well, but that can never be. Saunder sleeps in a room but a little beyond these, with pistols at hand; he is an old soldier, used to sentry work; a word, almost, would wake him. Yet, my God! to think that those two will leave you to chance protection—Casimir, to whom the fierce struggle of Court intrigue is so familiar. I may be over anxious, yet to err in care for you, is it so great a fault in a friend?"

"I am frightened," said I, taking off my diamonds hastily, "and will at least present no temptation." I put them away.

Kilmarnock moodily seated himself, gazing into the bright wood fire. Though 'twas summer, the evening winds from the sea were chilly.

"Helen," said he, interrupting a reverie about Stuart, "are you going—as you have so many times—to forgive this last grief inflicted on you by jealousy — the meanest passion that can animate a human breast? He is haughtily confident that it is so."

"It is not so; his confidence is misplaced. Sir Burleigh threatens me with exile to Muirhaig if I continue resentment against him. For

that I do not greatly care, he would himself come for me in a day or two."

"Do not deceive yourself," Sergius spoke low and rapidly. "The dukedom, though seemingly secure, depends still for its final settlement on our success, which I count secure, and on Stuart's then pleasure. This keeps Sir Burleigh on thorns, and influences him in favour of any mood or caprice of the others. You, though you do not yet credit it, are but a cypher to him compared to this title. Possibly, having secured it, he might then look around on the emptiness of his life without you—for the most astounding fact in it all is that he loves you from his heart, yet would sacrifice you to this Moloch ambition. 'Tis to me Herod and Mariamne over again—the man who could plan and order her death, and yet broke his heart after."

"A good while after," say I with a sob; "yet 'twould be more than the bitterness of death, could I think him truly indifferent to me. I love him when he is harsh or unkind, which is but seldom, and always deserved. It is terrible to me."

"That," said he, "is easily explained. You had no parents to watch over you—no father, and took to Sir Burleigh as the nearest authority over you."

"I had a father," said I, "who was a scoundrel, Sir Burleigh says."

"Sir Burleigh lies," said he. "Colonel Rohan was a gambler in an age of gamblers; a dueller when duelling was far more the mode than now. A brave man, extravagant, heedless, yet honourable; and that Sir Burleigh knows, for they were friends."

"He is nothing to me," say I, with a gesture of dismissal of the subject, "though he were an apotheotized saint. I do not care to hear of it. 'Twas Sir Burleigh who protected me; let the other be as brave as he might, it none advantaged me. Sir Burleigh may call him what he will, I have no good word for him. Had you left Boyd to the mercy of the world, and he could after whine and sigh for your memory, he would be but deficient in a sense of justice—be a fool, in short."

"There is something harsh and severe in such a judgment," said Sergius, "though I own its justice."

"Well," said I, with a slight yawn, "dismissing this gambler and dueller to wherever he now belongs, let us return *au ciel*, or as near to it as the shortcomings of one's friends admit."

"That," said he, "is to the Dukedom of Denzillac."

"Not necessarily"—I took his hand—"that we will shelve. Cannot we talk of you?"

"Not without treason," said he, "to a guest, for I am not worthy such sweet lips' praise; and to condemn me were inhospitable."

"I am going to praise you," said I, "and that recklessly. No half praise will serve for the best statesman the cause has; the highest intellect in Scotland, or even the world; and —and my true and dear friend."

He laughed, a little sadly. "Hyperbole, Nell, will not fill a hungry heart. Your praise is precious, your friendship sweet; yet I weary, loving you better than life, for some return, some tone, glance, that would speak not of friendship."

"Are you not satisfied," said I, "with a love that would die for you; that is enduring as time or eternity; that would reach to heaven were you there? Is there nothing in this wretched world beyond earthly passion? There is, in my love for you."

Kilmarnock shaded his eyes with his hand, perchance from the brightness of the fire.

"Hope," said he, "has no existence for me then. My life must consume in the dull round of duty. I am to see the petty and frigid love of another rewarded to the uttermost—the selfish

and cruel caprice, the want of faith, the ceaseless and causeless cruelty, the corroding care of his love met with forgiveness, tenderness, patience; while all my long and utter devotion is to you as fairy gold, which, tested, turns to dead leaves. I am but a man. This planetary and far-off vision of love none consoles me for the utter indifference to me that it expresses."

His dejected and melancholy air and tone moved my pity—I had known so long that he loved me.

"Sergius," said I, "be content. Similes are both dangerous and untrue. I love you neither as a planet nor any other far-off visionary object, but as my dearest friend on earth. I have no claim on your regard, am utterly unworthy of it; yet do not cease to be my friend. Were you to leave me I should indeed be unhappy. Do not continue grieved or angry."

I knelt beside him, and drew his hands from before his face. For a minute the discontent lingered, darkening, then slowly vanished. I resumed my seat, wistfully watching him. Presently he smiled, though rather sadly.

"Sweet," said he, "I know I am unreasonable. Yet you know how constantly you are in my thoughts, and should not speak coldly to me."

"Neither should the fire send out black and spent ashes, yet remain aglow. A mere cold word of yours would not persuade me you was my enemy. Yet I am sorry. I repent in sackcloth if I vexed you. I never wilfully do so. Will you have this?"

I rose, and searching in the box in which I had placed my jewels, brought out a somewhat crudely executed miniature of myself, done at the farm by the limner who had taken the large, showy portrait of Alexis. The eyes and mouth were somewhat like,the other features blurred, indistinct, and imperfectly finished. 'Twas wrought on a smooth piece of white cow-horn, instead of ivory, and having been contemptuously rejected by M'Causland, and even Sandy, for its deficiency of colouring, had fallen to me, and been kept with threads and spools in my reticule.

Half amused, I offered it to Kilmarnock, never having shown it to Stuart for its many imperfections.

"Will I?" said he, "will I not?—gladly. The eyes are exceeding well done."

In criticising this, and laughing at the story of the travelling limner's unmerciful critics at the farm, he recovered some of his usual calm. On leaving to rejoin the party downstairs, from

whom his absence had been too long for courtesy, I bid him send Sir Burleigh up, as I neither could nor would stay now in these distant rooms alone, since he had said 'twas dangerous.

Drawing my chair nearer the fire, I spread my hands idly to the glow, thinking.

The small jewel-box open on the table close by, the diamonds were glinting in the firelight. For awhile, thinking of Sergius, I did not note this; then, with a sudden tremor, recalled why I had taken them off. Kilmarnock never spoke idly. Why should he warn me in vain? I rose to close the box—there should be at least no material temptation. Why did not Sir Burleigh come; sure the Doutelle could wait for its chronicling? Ha! a step in the corridor, in the anteroom! Confused, half frightened, I knew not how to fly, yet prepared for retreat; when Stuart, coming hastily in, closed both doors.

I did not speak to him, but resumed my seat, looking indifferently into the fire. If he chose the indignity of trespassing, 'twas his affair—we were, in a manner, guests at Stellarig.

He spoke to me; I would not reply.

Sitting down opposite me the magic of a fixed gaze insensibly raised my eyes to his. A fire of hate and anger burned in them. He should see was I the weed he imaged—to be uprooted and

flung hither and thither on the breath of calumny, the puppet of a fantoccini show!

For awhile neither spoke, then he said, hoarsely,

"I have come to give the lie to your letter. You are a demon! tormenting me first one way, then another. This latest of false accusation of a baseness I, even I, could not practise, is the climax. Be assured, I will not trespass long; but, being for the last time, let minutes be waived. I ask how you dare accuse me of this baseness? How, if sane, you can imagine me parading my heart-wounds to Dupont, to anyone, who have anguish enough in bearing them unspoke of? I to have the hypocrite pity, the insulting comments of a vile priest, who, let him be Pope, I would punish could I now lay hands on him! If you can still accord me a shadow of belief, on my honour I did not meet Dupont last night."

"Then," said I, collapsing into a mighty meekness, "do you know who it was?"

"Yes," said he, fury lessening, "I do."

Ashamed that I could not keep angry, I blushed; every word in the hateful and hasty letter came before me, sending waves of heat to my face.

"You need not stare at me," said I at

length—talking like the embarrassed St. Peter, at random.

"Considering," he retorted, "that Kilmarnock has got your portrait parading, staring will not hurt you; but that is not the question. Is the exile of the base wretch to continue?"

"Do not torment me;" tears rained from my eyes. "I thought you guilty. It near broke my heart that you could calmly listen to a word against me."

"'Twas Benedict," said he, crossing over to where I sat, "my brother. I did not mean that his presence should be known. Of course you found him out. Thank God he did not see you abroad alone at that hour, and has now gone back to France. He is a priest. I told him Dupont lied, and presently went out in search of him; but he had gone, wisely, with a whole skin. That is the whole. What next am I to suffer?"

"I am sorry," said I, recovering, "very sorry, if you have pardoned me."

"Helen," said he, "when we are perhaps parted for ever, you may then be remorseful for the bitter pain you inflict; but when day by day you seek occasion against me, a few tears will not banish remembrance. You are killing my love for you. No, no, I do not mean it"—as I sobbed convulsively—"that will never die.

I only mean that—that I defy that devil Kilmarnock to part us. To see him, like the serpent, 'Alert, and squatting at the ear of Eve,' makes me miserable; but I know you love me, with all my faults. And I love you, sweet, had you ten thousand more faults than you have—and you have none at all. How could I, as you imaged, stand and listen to any treason against you? My blood boils to think you could suspect me of so vile a betrayal. I cannot, however, be dishonoured by the act of another. Benedict was convinced by me, ere he left for France, that Dupont had uttered but lies and calumny. Dupont himself has gone, though whither I cannot tell. Probably reflection told him he had done a dangerous thing for himself in attempting to libel you, as he had; but that reckoning will wait, and accumulate. My dear, what have you taken off your jewels for?" His glance rested on the open jewel-box.

"Sergius says this part of the house is lonely, is dangerous to be in alone."

"Then I suppose he kindly volunteers to be guard? There is no danger, absolutely. Am I so mighty far behind him in intelligence that I cannot think and plan for you? 'Tis the cruellest, most diabolic thing in the world, this futile rivalry of his. Was he but your friend I

could be thankful for his careful thought for you. As it is, careful thought is but covert accusation. I am no match for him in art, to suggest by ten thousand inferences my greater love for and care of you; had I been twenty years married, I might."

The infinite spite of this climax made me smile; yet I sighed as at a treason to my friend, and we left talking of Sergius. His iniquities paled and faded before mine, so I gathered, sitting, not unhappily, listening to a million cobweb charges—motes which filled the sunbeam of restored love and trust. Perfect happiness filled our hearts; time and chance and change receded, fear and pain fled. The illimitable horizon of love, of hope, of youth, was around us—forgiving all things, hoping all things, Peace, with folded wings, stood by. After the cruel anguish of doubt and anger, love, glorious in its eternity, embraced us. Perchance the morrow might darken its purple plumes, which now fanned us to perfect bliss—of that we were oblivious.

* * * * * *

Like wine, its power increasing with every draught, the excitement of that summer heightened with every day. Stellarig—the whole house, the shut-in and cloister-like garden, the

over-grown and deserted walks—became instinct with life, with subtle spirit. We were all in accord, in that the intensity of feeling for the cause, now so near success or failure, communicated to each an anodyne for mere personal feelings, a powerful stimulant to friendship. Something of the old regard, the fraternity that had reigned at the Manor, came back to Kilmarnock and Stuart. They were much together, and by degrees, as many more strangers frequented Stellarig, I was more and more a prisoner to our own suite of rooms—as in a storm at sea women are sent below, to listen and conjecture what the confused noises on deck may mean. Illimitable trust in Kilmarnock as pilot reconciled me. Sir Burleigh praised my patience, desiring me to believe that I was well out of all the involutions of a policy that perforce changed daily—as every day fresh adherents were gained, to all of whose views some deference had to be paid.

"In the main,' said he, "we are going on as we were; but with these d——d Scots chiefs wary walking is requisite. Casimir understands them, as he ought, being one, and humours them admirably. They and their cat-o'-mountain clans would tire the patience of an Englishman or a saint. Even Sergius, who is a little of both, has not Stuart's patience.

Yet they are our chief hope. I never did believe in French aid, nor never will. 'Tis unnatural that Frenchmen should help Englishmen. They were not planted on opposite sides of the water for nothing."

Stuart and Kilmarnock would come in sometimes for rest; both substantially pleading with Sir Burleigh that to disclose plans, of necessity as changeable as chameleons, would but harass the brain of any who were not immediate actors in their execution. Both were strung up to an intensity of excitement, their whole thoughts swallowed up in the details of the coming struggle.

"You will wear your eyes out," said I to Stuart, who was sitting in a sort of excited trance, gazing into the fire. I put my hands over their burning brightness. He drew them down and kissed them.

"Ah! Nell," said he, "I seem to see the clans pouring down the mountain sides, overflowing Glen Fillan—a sea of waving tartans, a host of loyal and true hearts. I am possessed, like the demoniacs of old; this picture fills my thoughts, waking and sleeping, always the same —a summer morning, and the march of loyal clans."

"It is magnificent!" said I, awe-struck, as the

whole stupendous scene presented itself to my mind. "Yet, my dear, if you are to be present, follows you must not get ill with excitement."

"Do not reason about it," he replied, irritably, "on such petty lines, too—like a citizen's wife at a mayor's election—or I will not come here again, I swear."

"Then we shall meet at Glen Fillan." I withdrew, abashed at the pettiness of my anxiety for him being detected and reproved, yet with a hankering to enforce it, for he was truly getting thin and haggard with this constant strain of excitement.

In comparing me to a citizen's wife, loyal in her small anxiousness, there was no true sting in the reproach. I did not fail to appreciate the grandeur of his expectation, the awful significance of the clans' march; yet we are but mortal; 'twas to be excused that, seeing his whole mind fevered and overwrought, I should take some order to prevent its ill effects. I brought him a white rose from a bowl standing in the window-seat.

"There," said I, purposely pricking his hand with its thorns, "is your badge — Stuart-white."

"Your emblem," said he irritably, flinging it in the fire; "see, my hand is scratched."

"Well," said I, "that is nothing, I will bind it up for you."

He submitted, amused, yet half angry, and in a lecture on the clumsiness of women as surgeons, forgot, in a degree, the raptness of his vision of Glen Fillan—forgot it more and yet more, as I designed he should, and gave his tired mind a rest in a variety of little squabbles which would not have disgraced the most prosaic citizen; proving to his own entire content that women had no greatness of mind, could see nothing but their own immediate comfort or peril, as the case might be, had no sympathy of heart with wide aims, and a variety of other counts, which I, arranging the tumbled roses in their china bowl, listened to and laughed at, till, repenting his arraignment, he came and stood beside me, unsaying it all. Glen Fillan receded for awhile, and 'twas time some peacefuller thought reigned. I made him stay to luncheon, and Kilmarnock, who came in search of him, too; and forgetting all but that 'twas a holiday, we planned, the three of us, to go boating by moonlight.

Sir Burleigh coming in, stared at this careless feast and the gay guests, yet was quickly reconciled to the change.

"'Tis the bent bow," I whispered to him.

"He was getting ill with anxiety and excitement. "You will come with us, fishing, to-night?"

"Oh, yes," said he, "I suppose so, though 'tis unsafe enough."

Then, to wind up the afternoon, we went and played tennis in the old court, defying its memories, and the echoing voices calling out their numbers sounded jocund enough.

"'Tis like some scene in De Comines," thought I, pausing breathless from a run—

"A Duke, an Earl, a King, and me."

The old French words echoing around, we did not give up till near dinner, and then went in well content—the men like school lads on a holiday; I wondering how the world would go on without the subtlety of woman.

'Twas a lovely night—the crescent-moon homaged by crowds of pearly cloud-courtiers, each of whom, in passing, caught some golden gleam of favour—a light and pleasant breeze necessitating a sail, the men in fisher dress, for safety, I in a plaid. We all enjoyed the freedom, the glory and benignity of the summer, the dancing waves, the fresh sea air. One emotion only—that of perfect pleasure—held us. We might have been the fisher-folk we seemed

so completely was the burden of thought, of anxiety, left behind. It was a golden rest, a point of time imaging some of the serenity of Heaven. Returning after many hours to the house, bathed in the quiet moonlight, we separated, each with a sigh to the memory of so happy a truce with care.

* * * * * *

July, hot and cloudless, passed. Shut up so closely as to be almost prisoner, lest of the many French and other emissaries continually coming and going I should be subject of comment, I grew fretted and weary, petitioning to be sent to Muirhaig, where freedom and the wide purple moors would in some degree reconcile me to exclusion from councils, about which I could only conjecture. Kilmarnock had offered Muirhaig, but Sir Burleigh would not agree, since he could not be there constantly himself.

"Besides," said he, "see what treason hatched in your last absence, causing us both unhappiness."

So, repiningly, I turned from the contemplation of peace and quiet to the ceaseless surge and eddy of the now unquiet Stellarig.

Therefore was it with peculiar pleasure that

on the last day of July, about six at night, Sir Burleigh coming in, to find me listlessly reading De Comines, told me we started that night at two for the Highlands. "Gipsy or soldier fashion," said he, "a plaid and a pocket of oatmeal."

Very gladly I packed our valises, putting all our other things safely away in their kists, which I locked. "For," whispered Sir Burleigh, "before we return maybe the royal and loyal troops would want Stellarig."

Regretfully risking the pictures to this prophesied company, we bade adieu to Stellarig, and, guided by Saunder, started on our way to Glenfinnan.

It is useless with so much to chronicle to set forth the weary yet beautiful pilgrimage. Stuart had preceded us; at different points we were met by armed Highlanders, and found our safeguards signed by him useful—not for the writing, but the seal in black wax, which was eagerly scanned, and carefully verified.

"By ——!" said Sir Burleigh, "'twould be at his life's risk any emissary of Hanover came here alone."

Once, on the third or fourth day, sitting down to rest and dine at mid-day, we were witness to a singular scene. A party of English

prisoners, with a Highland guard, were being rapidly marched to Glenfinnan to be presented—the first-fruits of victory—to the Prince.

I pitied the dejected, weary, and footsore Englishmen, and begged Saunder to intercede with their guard to give them some of our provision.

"I daurna," said he, "the guard wad dirk me were I to offer intervention. They are as a lion wi' its prey."

So, unseen, we watched them rapidly forced to tread the heathery way, whose intricacies they had scorned in their attack on its hereditary master.

Sir Burleigh was moved. He did not quite like to see Englishmen subject to conquest, even in the cause, consoling himself with the thought of "the lad's" clemency.

So on, with this flying column in front, we went, reaching Glenfinnan in time for an enthusiastic welcome, the excitement of this important capture still in every mind.

The prisoners were at a little distance, sitting and lying on the short grass, a ring of Highland guards forming an outer circle. They did not seem to be having much to eat, the Highlanders being apparently of opinion that the honour of

being prisoners to the Prince was enough for all mundane needs.

"Can't eat oatmeal," I heard one say.

"Send them some venison," I suggested to Kilmarnock.

"No, no," said he, "would you have the clans up in arms? We cannot afford it to our own men. Why should these Englishmen be better treated?"

"Give them my share," I importuned, feeling for their unhappy, tired, and anxious plight, "my share and Sir Burleigh's."

"That I must decline," said Sir Burleigh, "I want my share myself."

"Yet," said the Prince, "I will not see them starve." So at dinner he sent a goodly supply, which they received with a ringing cheer.

To me it sounded strange and sad that Englishmen should in captivity cheer their captors. Yet as, after dinner, strolling hither and thither, we approached them, they rose and respectfully saluted us, the captain thanking Stuart for his humanity in seeing that they were provided with food.

To Kilmarnock I suggested that they should be stationed nearer the river, for the convenience of bathing their tired feet.

"You will make pets of them directly," said

he, yet agreed to my suggestion," of which they seemed but too glad to avail themselves, each one saluting me as he passed, having, doubtless, with the quick instinct of captivity, watched the result of my intervention on their behalf.

Paddling in the river's margin, or stooping to lave their hot faces after the hard march, I felt ashamed for their captivity, and inclined to heroically beg for their release.

Yet, reflecting that Stuart would be justly displeased was I to do so, as infringing my province and doubting his clemency, I contented myself with their present immunity from downright hardships, and all being tired we each withdrew to our resting-places in the huge mountain sides, and sleep made a solitude as of the dead—all the souls fled to some far region of rest, the wearied bodies scattered in no less repose in Glenfinnan.

Over the blue waters of Loch Eil day was dawning when all arose, the vale for awhile bearing the busy aspect of a camp. Fires were lit and food prepared. The prisoners huddled together with the shy and sullen aspect of dejected Englishmen.

"Do not despair," said I, passing near to them. "I am English."

I did not, as I spoke, think of anything beyond a cheering word.

"We have to thank you then," said the captain, "for our kind treatment. Yesterday we were driven like dogs by these Highlanders. One of my men is near dead."

"Which?" said I, shocked, yet hardly realizing, since sullenness seemed their prevailing ill. They parted, falling back on each side of a young man, who lay with his head raised on a flat stone.

"We stood around him," explained the captain, "not wishing to plead for too much pity, and hoping he would recover from his fatigue, but I fear 'tis a bad case for him."

I stepped forward and looked down. The poor lad, for he was barely twenty, opened his eyes with a moan of pain—they were red and bloodshot. His face was white, with purple rings under the eyelids.

"It is sunstroke," said the captain anxiously. "He lost his hat, and in some of the passes the heat was terrific."

"Have you let him lie so all night," said I, shocked, "because your pride would not suffer you to appeal to us?" I went to Kilmarnock, who was listening to some communication from Saunder, and told him. He returned with me,

and ordered two of the guard to take the half-insensible lad to the water's edge, and sending Saunder with them, with directions to strip off the man's coat, and wrap wet clothes round his head and shoulders, proceeded up the glen. Sir Burleigh had gone too, only the prisoners and their guard remained, the Englishmen straining their eyes in the direction in which their comrade had been carried. Presently I saw him again borne to their midst; he had revived, Saunder told me, and asked to be restored to his companions.

"Sure we are not tigers," thought I, "that they stand at bay thus in our midst!" proving that I knew then but little of the horrors of war.

Sending Saunder with some wine for the invalid, he having a little recovered, I went on up the glen, forgetting all but the great purpose for which we were here assembled.

In the midst—a heroic presence in a magnificent scene—stood Stuart, solitary, but for Tullibardine, the aged Duke of Athole, who with him was planting the white, red, and blue standard, to which presently the clans would do homage as to the standard of their Sovereign. Athole, who had narrowly scraped through in the '15, was an object of some interest and reverence

but all my heart went out in reverence for Stuart; not that he was on the point of success, but that he had truly and heroically attained it by his own exertions. I forgot Kilmarnock; I forgot Sir Burleigh, though as we stood his heavy arm was on my shoulders; I saw only Stuart—saw him with a rapture that was pain in its intensity, a yearning such as that in which we watch the sunrise. Our lives seemed divided now for ever. Sir Burleigh's arm grew heavier round my shoulders. He, too, was in a trance of awe and joy—that he, through all distresses, should now see the sovereignty of Stuart acknowledged by men in hosts, prepared and eager to do battle with his enemies.

Stuart's face was colourless, his lips tightly closed, his eyes flashing with a steely glance. In his hand he held the Proclamation, a copy of which I had read, setting forth his determination, by aid of his brave Hielanders, to reconquer his heritage or perish. His Commission of Regency would also be read.

All was silence in that lonely valley. The breath of the summer morning was stilled. At either end of the magnificent glen could be dimly seen the blue waters of Loch Eil and Loch Shiel; on either hand rose the grey and rugged mountains.

Ah, what intense life was hid in that fold of earth! Only omniscience could believe in, appreciate, the intensity of the feelings stored in each labouring heart, hid in each teeming brain of the band united there. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour."

A sound of footfalls, softened on the turf. 'Twas but the English prisoners, come to witness the triumph of one soon to be their Sovereign. Once placed, we ceased to think of them. Hour on hour passed—time had stopped, for us it was a thing of naught. Tireless, expectant, had night fallen, our straining eyes would still have fixed themselves on that central figure.

Sir Burleigh might have been carven from stone, so rigidly he stood, but for the heat-drops that gathered in rows on his broad brow.

At last! We did not know, till the first faint notes of the pibroch sounded, how strained had been our thoughts, how rigid and still our attitude. Then, cresting the hill, came the first clan—which, I know not, for I saw but Stuart, as they marched past, receiving the homage of chiefs and clans, Soon the valley was filled. I saw Stuart of Appin with his black beard. Endless, to me, seemed the procession—and I wished

it more, and yet more. By now Kilmarnock and Sir Burleigh had made their way to Stuart, forming, with the chiefs and Tullibardine, the nucleus of his future Court. It was a grand scene. No audience-room on earth could compare to that throne-room formed by Nature for a Highland King. The Proclamation was read amid the interruptions of applause and enthusiasm; then the Commission of Regency. This was not enough. Formal documents appeal to the mind, we had now an appeal to our hearts; Stuart made it in a splendid speech. Bonnets flew up into the air. The rapture of reception accorded to his words could not stop at emotion; some evidence of devotion was needed. Looking at the fierce faces around, knowing their wild and lawless hearts, I trembled for the English prisoners. By a coincidence, Kilmarnock's glance followed mine. He spoke to Stuart, who started, and looked round. The men, who were naturally intent on his face, saluted respectfully, and at his signal came forward, following the dejected and melancholy captain, who again saluted.

"Go, sir," said Stuart, "to your General, say what you have seen, and add that I am coming to give him battle."

With curt and soldier-like thanks for this unexpected release, the Englishman withdrew,

collected his dejected band, and, provided with a guide by Kilmarnock, slowly departed from Glenfinnan, leaving with us, by Sergius' counsel, the lad who was sun-struck, and still too ill to walk, his release being assured when he should recover.

"He is in good hands," said the Captain gratefully. "Was he my son I should feel no anxiety for his safety—'tis all I can do to prevent myself turning rebel, and my men too."

Sergius bowed a silent acknowledgment. By now Stuart was swamped in the sea of tartans, the valley was filled with them; shrill Gaelic rose high over the pibrochs, cheer upon cheer was raised. Kilmarnock returned to his chief. I wandered away to a quiet ravine, boulder-bestrown, and listened absently to the sea of sound beyond, which lessened and lessened like an ebbing-tide, as clan after clan marched off to some appointed camp. Soon all was silence. The purple evening fell, dew rose in misty veils. Intense feeling, unutterable emotion had tired my mind; idly I ceased to think of the purpose of our assembling. Alone, I felt that loneliness would ever be mine henceforth. No selfish regret haunted me—I rejoiced in the fulfilling of his destiny by Stuart, joyed in his success. Yet, was it not the first hour of final

parting? I knew I could be nothing to him in this new sphere—and bowing my head silently, Hagar-like, accepted the banishment of fate.

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"Holyrood," said I to Kilmarnock, bitterly, "seems now to us our natural abiding-place. Yes, I saw the triumphal entry—the crowds, the acclamations. Do not mistake me. I rejoice over it all with both heart and mind, for his sake; but I am tired of it. Sergius, I need not keep a mask on to you, 'tis a blessed relief. Sir Burleigh's enthusiasm is still at fever heat. I wish he would divorce me; I am not fit to be a Duchess, in that though I have no humility, I have not the pride of position. To me to be Duchess seems no more than to put on perhaps an extra diamond. I am not grateful for either, but indifferent. Diamonds, Duchess-ships, tire me, when I am expected to enthusiase over them. I am tired, I say, and if I go to this reception, 'tis to please Sir Burleigh, who to me seems like David, dancing before the ark, appeared to Michael."

"Curse the mummeries!" said Kilmarnock scornfully. "To be a king were well enough, but a Court and courtiers should be fifty years bottled for present use; then 'twere well enough. But 'tis not his fault, 'tis part of the price. We must make it as light to him as we can. Come,

Helen, misanthropy will not avail you nor me. Sir Burleigh bids you attend. My wife waits for you, with other ladies, in the anteroom. I must conduct you. You are part of the show, —the best part, to me."

"Then," said I, shaking out the long snow-white brocade of my Court train, "give me your hand, and since go we must, go we will."

Descending by a private stair (we had now apartments in Holyrood) I entered the anteroom with Kilmarnock, and being left by him with a group of ladies—all of whom were friends of a fortnight, and flatterers—I had no need to propitiate Milady K. Amidst my court stood a beautiful girl, red-haired, and with a skin of ivory—a lovely bit of nature's colouring, quiet, and somewhat sullen, as disdaining to improve, by mind or heart, her vivid material beauty.

To her face I saw, with a sorrowful yet unsurprised pang, that Stuart's glance often wandered. She won admiration from me, and so far as it seemed to lie in her power was amiable, more to me than to her older friends. Pearlie, so she told me, was her home name. Pearlie Cameron, indeed, attached herself to me with an artlessness that in any but a perfectly unsophisticated country beauty would have been the sublime of art; and I, disdaining to

retain by stratagem the waning affection of my promoted lover, thought often, dreamily, how painlessly come upon us the great shocks of life, which we anticipate will crush us to the very dust of anguish and death. Sometimes I could even smile as, amid the crowded and gay Courts held daily, I detected his glance wander from one to the other of us twain, resting on me remorsefully, as though battling with the treason in his heart.

"Such is earthly love!" thought I, seeing the struggle to be constant before the temptation of this new loveliness. "Helen Rohan is forgot. So be it, nor strive to make linger the last flickering embers of a burnt-out fire."

Miss Cameron herself was unmoved. Of a proud, stubborn Scotch stock, her imagination and intellect centred her pride in her family. That they should be distinguished was well enough. To a lover at her feet she might accord a kind reception. To the dawn of love afar off she was insensible as a late sleeper is to the sunrise. Other her friends were not so blind to the growing preference. It was whispered of, commented on, yet cautiously and coldly—the marriage of Scotch royalty with Scotch nobility being no visionary or unattainable honour—and strictly and straitly guarded,

the fair Cameron shone like a red star to the dazzled eyes of all.

Not to Kilmarnock. For awhile he strove, by every art, to prevent my seeing the open and palpable desertion; for awhile he strove to stand between me and a truth he feared would be bitter to me. Then, seeing I was not blinded nor insensible to the change, his wrath and fury, not content with Stuart as victim, spent some of their force on the unconscious Cameron.

"She is a semi-idiot," said he bitterly, "and as such a fit object of his admiration, to whom mind, wit, intellect, are unnecessary. I wish him no worse fate than to win her—a mule is less obstinate, a woolsack as impressionable to fine shades of feeling. Her pride is wholly material, and won she would be as a wooden idol with diamond eyes—deaf and blind to every form of love but that she could mould to her own interest or advancement. Grant her beautiful. There is as little comparison as between a highly-finished life-size puppet and the Venus of Milo."

"Do not be zealous," said I with a sigh. "'Tis hard to insist on an immortal passion. I am not grieved that he should be happy in another illusion. 'Twas but that from the first.

Could it be anything else, when the first flush of victory is to him oblivion of the past? Shall we walk this minuet? See, Miss Cameron is coming. Well, Pearlie, are you tired?"

"No," said she, "I am waiting for the Prince to ask me to dance. Oh, he is coming. Lady Clifford, lend me a flower from your bouquet to give him. I do not heed his compliments overmuch, but one must be civil."

"Take thus much," said I, dividing it fairly, with a sense of amusement, giving her the best half of the beautiful white roses, most affected by the ladies of this new Court.

"Thank you!" said she, with a placid embrace and a kiss.

Stuart came up to claim her hand for the dance. I could not forbear a slight sarcastic smile, as I courtesied a courtly return to his salutation.

"Lady Clifford is lovely!" said the fair Cameron with slow enthusiasm, as he led her away, "and so kind. I begged a flower for you, and she gave me half her bouquet."

Kilmarnock laughed and sneered in his most cynic way at this.

"Drop the other half," said he, "and I will tread it underfoot. Do not share with her."

Partly from disdain I complied. Stuart,

turning at some remark of his companion's, saw the slight, apparently accidental action, and a swift quiver of fury passed over his face.

"That arrow has sped," muttered Sergius, replying to his glance with a contemptuous smile. "I hate him."

"Think of me," said I, with a half-sob and a difficult utterance, "not only of yourself. Will you force this desertion on the notice of all? Must I be pitied, that your anger at him may be satisfied?"

"I hate him," he repeated. "My anger at this cruelty will never be satisfied. This is the fate that all along I have foreseen for you, yet it tortures me that you should suffer. I cannot be silent. You are to me as my own soul. Would to God I could fling these scattered roses in his face, and after call him to an account! He is a devil."

Thus it will be seen that the glistening gaiety, the white roses, the silk robes, the soft speeches of a Court can but ill-satisfy the cravings of the heart. All was glittering happiness — one gorgeous reception, one light-hearted ball or banquet succeeded to another. In me they will not find their chronicler. For so long one set of feelings, of emotions, one alternation of hope, of fear, had held me—one circle of all-engrossing

thought surrounded me—that, like a mariner from mid-ocean, to whom the wrecks, the calms, the storms of infinity are familiar, suddenly placed on a flowering islet, I missed, with a sense of loss, almost of desolation, the vastness and apparent unendingness of our former life-thoughts. The glitter was no solace to me, the ease no pleasure, the luxury no attraction. I strove to be pleased—as a Bedouin Arab might strive to appreciate the thousand attractions of a gorgeous palace—sighing the while for the fierce free life of the desert, the watchings for sunrise, the infinite and boundless surroundings, the light and heat from above, the sweet and homely shelter of the tent, in which his life could pass, uncramped by chains of custom.

I was not free now. The conventionalities did not pain me—they were soon acquired, nor hard to practise. In them was a certain dignity, as of a stately, arras-hung hall, along which one paced, by choice, with sedateness. The pain was that, in themselves, they were insufficing. After a pageant, a banquet, a reception, when all the varied and splendid show was over and the imagination satiated and asleep, then the heart would awake, craving, insatiate, to seek its share of life. Alas for mine! Its share had gone, like last year's snow in harvest. All had

been as it now seemed—the beautiful dream of the morning, which the uprisen sun scatters.

We had some pretty rooms, well plenished with silk hangings; worn, but beautifully-carven furniture, and our own pictures brought from Stellarig, which was now a barrack in very truth. I sometimes thought of the old walled-in refuge, where so many plots had been matured, so much work done.

Beyond being guests at Holyrood, we saw no more of Stuart than had we been the merest outside citizens. A great coldness had fallen between him and Sir Burleigh. I strove to do him justice, to believe that it was not necessarily success which made him different, icy and unapproachable, to his oldest friend. Nor was it that Sir Burleigh's devotion had slackened, though he was more diffident of showing it—prouder in manner, less eager in seeking now the society of his master. Yet to me he would not allow that any word of blame should be breathed of Stuart; and we would often sit silent in our grand lodgment, listlessly listening to the many voices in the quadrangle beneath our windows; hearing the horse-hoofs clattering in; seeing, when we cared to approach the windows, the gorgeous uniforms of the riders; noting, heavily and indifferently, the comings and goings, as state

prisoners might; each, as I knew, longing for a familiar footstep, a familiar voice, to come and dissolve this spell of silence, of separation, vain-longing. Voice and footstep were alike gone from our lives. Thinking thus, I sighed.

"Helen," said Sir Burleigh, half querulously, "why are you so dull in this gay Court? You must not think we are neglected. Remember the thousand new cares, duties, the lad has now. I would be inhuman to accuse him of want of faith or friendship because he cannot, as in bypast times, be for ever with us."

"Why," said I smiling, "'tis not that; we see him more constantly than any others in Edinburgh. 'Tis that I am not Duchess enough to take a proper delight in palaces, and like to see you more cheerful. Suppose you ask him for a colonelcy. You can ride well enough."

"On a cob," said he laughing.

"And would look well in uniform."

"My army lore is too antiquated," said he, with a dissatisfied sigh. "All I now look for is to be restored the Manor, and live the rest of my life in peace with you. That is all I want."

I embraced him with an infinite yearning. To restore to him the content and supremacy he had there enjoyed, would indeed be a delight. Here he was but a cypher, one among many;

there he had been king on his own account, and I his faithfullest vassal.

"You are a good girl!" said he, with a sort of grateful surprise at finding one unchanging, amid the many changed. "I have always loved you, but never half enough."

"Let us stir the fire," said I, "and make a glow like a cottage hearth, in this hateful, gloomy, proud abode. 'Tis no wonder kings and queens grow wicked, mean, malevolent, so shut up in endless walls. The very feeling develops all that there is in us of the spider. Who in a Court could do other than weave webs?"

"Well," said he, "thank God we are not bound to it. 'Twas ever my design, once success crowned our efforts, to return to the Manor and be happy in our old way; not to cling to the skirts of a Court to extort gratitude. That is not my way, but we must not quarrel at a little involuntary neglect. Reason good that he is intoxicate with his great successes. That will sober down, and all be right."

"Never," thought I—though I held silence—"'twill but mount higher, and yet higher, till it is to us eclipsed."

For myself I was careless of all this speculation for the future. I wished 'tis true, to

be restored to the Manor, yet dreaded the effect of its quiet on the now aroused passions and ambition of Sir Burleigh. To talk of it was well enough; to be again banished to the small cares, the every-day routine — he had not counted the cost. What had a new-made Duke, a Court favourite, to do with country life?— and such he was, or believed himself to be.

"Second sight," said I, patting his handsome grizzled head, "is Scotch, and we are English, so we will go on awhile as we are"—a resolve not unpleasant to him, despite his gloomy mood. "All clouds will pass. We, any more than others, must not expect sunshine always."

"That's true," said he, "you are always right, my dear. 'Tis as you say, being so shut up in walls impairs one's temper and judgment. There is a review to-day. I will get Sergius to give me a mount, and ride to it as a spectator. Were you going?"

"No," said I indifferently. "Lady Cameron asked me—but—but I am not well enough, and will reserve my strength for the ball at night."

"Well, then," said he, rising, "'tis now near time to start," and dressing carefully he went off with Lord Balmerino, who looked in for him

—a handsome, genial old man, in the uniform of a General—an old friendship revived. He paid me some handsome compliments—assured me the whole scene would be shorn of its beauty if I were not there—yet went off gaily enough, despite my refusal. I sat over the fire, listening to the loud roll of the drums, the alarums of the trumpets, the shrillness of pibrochs, the marching of thousands of feet, all dulled by distance and the thick walls—sat and thought dreamily, now all was realised, of its nothingness. A few years would familiarise the now excited city to its new Sovereign; settle, perchance sadden, the minds of men, who were ready to worship Stuart as a god, as to his extreme likeness in frailty and error to themselves. Like a witch who, in realms of her own, finds joy or sorrow, I regarded all pageantry with indifference. Once, when the loudest acclaim of trumpets sounded, I drew aside the downsweep of the silk curtains, and saw the Prince, with a brilliant staff, ride into our quadrangle on his way to the great gates. He looked pallid, but very handsome, in a gorgeous uniform of Stuart tartan. Kilmarnock, Cromartie, and the Earl of Kelly rode beside him; a crowd—whose names I scarce knew or remembered—of distinguished men were with

them. I, in these stately rooms, was forgotten.

"So be it," I thought, withdrawing to the fireside as they rode out—yet slow tears misted my sight, gathered and fell, one by one, on my lap, unheeded. It is bitter, through all philosophy, to be unremembered by those we love—doubly harsh when they are happy, nor willing to share their joy.

I do not know how long I had sat thus, when the sudden thought occurred that I was treating M'Causland ill by so seldom writing. To him I could give a cheering view of festivities, of pageantries, of successes, of my life here, of Sir Burleigh's promotion. Let one rejoice in it, be it for ever so brief a moment.

"Here is history," thought I, penning it. "Facts clothed in rainbow hues which are but, their colouring withdrawn, dank vapours." Yet I writ on, and was scarce concluded—having beguiled the time in beguiling my worthy uncle—when the clatter of horse-hoofs in the courtyard drew me to the window. So great had been the silence it was—this sound—the breaking of a spell.

Presently Kilmarnock came hastily in, his face flushed, his eyes dark and angry.

"You did not get my letter," said he,

glancing at the writing-table, "or rather my wife's, in which she begged you to share her calèche?"

"No," I replied, wonderingly, "but I did not wish to be present at this review;" then, like Cendrillon, tears fell at my exclusion—against sense, reason, judgment, 'twas not the review, but the forgetfulness.

"You are a pretty Duchess," said he, "mewed up here, and all the city wondering and waiting to see you. 'Tis known you saved his life. Denzillac's title is openly discussed. By going, a thousand, a million rumours will be stopped. Yet you calmly allow them scope. Forgive me, I am half beside myself. You must come, Helen, if only for an hour. Believe me, 'tis in your own interest, to save Sir Burleigh; you must be seen with him. Put on your richest robes. I have brought a calèche, and he can join you there."

"There, then!" I put on a rich embroidered sacque of tawny satin, a gold-coloured cap, and gloves of perfumed silk. "See! No enchanter could so quickly win obedience." Taking a jewelled fan, and lace kerchief, I stood before him, the mantle covering my plain silk robe and flowing to my feet.

"That will do," said he, with approval, "yet the ordeal of ten thousand eyes may unnerve

you." He poured out wine for both, and after drinking it we proceeded through the silent, deserted corridors. The very guards and footmen had one by one stolen away to join the city pageant. All were off but the guards on duty at the gates and in the guard-room at hand.

An orderly, who had attended Kilmarnock, led his horse, riding with it after our carriage, and with some difficulty as we approached the ground. We made way through the immense multitudes, only the General's uniform of Kilmarnock and our mounted guard inclining the populace to give place.

I heard with a sort of bewilderment the many comments on myself—as though I had fallen asleep over my letter to M'Causland and was dreaming all this. Only as we drew nearer to the centre, passing the multitude of drawn-up carriages, was a less audible commentary, yet the ordeal of twice ten thousand eyes was on us —as when a new actor enters on the hushed stage before a silent audience.

The march past had not yet commenced; the major part of the review of the troops was over. A lull, the most fatal to all hope of being unobserved, held the vast crowd. The very staff surrounding the Prince were silent, as, alighting with Kilmarnock, who saluted in passing, we

left the driver to take the carriage to the rear, and walked on to where, on tiers of raised seats, sat the city dames and damsels of high degree. Securing for me a seat next Milady Kilmarnock, who received me very civilly, Sergius withdrew to his military duties, satisfied.

Dame Margaret and I did not speak much; both were too intent on the scene before us, and the thoughts it inspired, to have room for private piques or unreasoning jealousies. Most probably she thought it an arrangement of Stuart's, and when the march past commenced ceased to notice me at all, except occasionally to mention the name of some chief, heading his wild-looking clan, who was unknown to me.

I saw the fair Cameron at a distance, also in the front rank, hideously attired in pale blue tartan, which colour deepened the fiery tints of her hair to positive red, and made her clear white skin seem thick and dark, so much is there in well-chose colours. Conscious of my own classic and Greek-faced beauty, set in its golden frame, I smiled at thought of her presumptuous rivalry—yet which, in justice to her, I may say was less hers than her friends.

Presently she worked her way to Milady K.'s other hand, and I laughed outright at the picture of we three sitting a-row in apparent peace

and amity. For Mistress Pearlie would talk to me, and giggle as girls do, and not look her best neither in so doing.

"Sure the Eumenides are here at work," thought I, "and I avenged unseeking."

For when, the march over, and all released to their own control, so many of the staff followed the Prince to the ladies' *parterre*, and of these so many stayed importuning Kilmarnock for presentation to me, that Stuart had the fair Cameron with her red hair and blue gown to himself—yet being near neighbours could not fail to see my courtiers, nor to note their impression of my beauty. By degrees his first half-impassioned greeting of Miss Cameron subsided to a critical survey of her ill-chosen dress, then to an inattentive listening to her giglot utterances or half-embarrassed silences, which seemed half sullen. To Kilmarnock, who had planned it, this social *coup* was keen pleasures. As the calèche came, with its prancing horses, to bear me again to Holyrood, he dismounted to assist me to my seat; and with a military escort of his providing I went in sort of semi-state home, passing Sir Burleigh and Balmerino on the road, soberly pacing their steeds through the thronged city.

I will not say that all this did not elate me,

nor yet that, on his almost immediate return, I was ungracious to Sergius, who was in a seventh heaven of ecstasy that his idol had found worshippers.

"'Twas my gold sacque," said I, laughing at his rapturous praises.

"'Twas you, sweet Charmides!" he returned. "Let who will prefer Judas-coloured hair, you have won a thousand hearts."

What more he said was indiscreet, and unworthy so wise a statesman, so shall not be recorded. I was listening half-amused, as an Eve to the serpent, when Sir Burleigh and Balmerino came in.

The old Earl smiled, and Sergius grew wisely dumb and wintry cool, and after awhile went out.

Sir Burleigh scolded me for coming, yet forgivingly. Balmerino vowed I was cruel to be so seldom abroad, and told Sir Burleigh he held the "Pearl of the Court."

There was to be a banquet, yet so late that we judged an early dinner wise, and Lady Kilmarnock came to it, her lord being away, Balmerino, and a young French officer whose name I forget. We were in the midst of this, and very merry, when, unannounced, Stuart stalked in.

Remembering his look and gait, none other

word will fit his entrance. 'Twas as that of a ghost, or some tragic demon, but little befitting a feast. As we all rose to receive him, he kept us standing awhile, with an hauteur little in consonance with his long friendship to all there. Then, bidding us be seated, sat himself beside Milady K. He did not relax in his stateliness, and as soon as might be one after another of our guests withdrew, leaving an embarrassed trio. I was for going and leaving him with Sir Burleigh, but could muster or feign no excuse.

"Sir Burleigh," said he, after a spell of silence, which seemed long and ominous, "General Cope is at Dunbar. It seems likely that you were wise in anticipating the banquet, which is countermanded. To-night we start for a long march to outflank him, by way of the hills south of the Frith. I have good hope of the result, but, of course, no absolute assurance of success. If we win, we march at once for England. Will you be prepared to accompany us, or await the fortune of war in Edinburgh? I thought best to propose this privately to you, as in Council none like to seem backward, whatever their hesitation may truly be."

"I will come, sir."

Sir Burleigh spoke unhesitatingly. The long night march had fewer terrors for him than the

thought of being at ease whilst his idol was in peril.

"Very well," was the softened response, "there is but little time to prepare. Kilmarnock will detail our plans to you; he is already in the Council Chamber." At this Sir Burleigh went eagerly in search of Sergius. Instead of going with him as he should, Stuart stayed.

"I wish you would not take him," I said angrily, "he has me to care for. 'Tis well enough for you, who find every day a fresh friend. I have no other."

"Save Kilmarnock," he replied bitterly, "who is now in all men's mouths as your lover. No stage-scene could equal your public appearance with him."

"Or yours with Margaret Cameron!"

"That red-headed damsel! Are you truly afraid of her?"

"I am neither afraid, grieved, nor surprised, nor am I willing to deprive her of your latest leavetakings."

"She is not at Holyrood, unfortunately."

"Sir, this is no jesting matter to me," said I fiercely. "That you change is not my anger, but that, changing, you dare hope to condone it with me. I have a right to expect more respect. Divine right is very well, but there is one diviner

still. Is it for you to afflict me by a mockery of love? Let it at least have the oblivion of silence."

"What are you talking about?" said he. "Am I to go, statue-like, with veiled eyes, or risk else such angry jealousy as this? I have been too much your humble servant. How often have I not remonstrated about Sergius? Now, at the first shadow of my resenting it, you show a bitterness and anger unparalleled."

I leaned back, shading my eyes with my hand; bitterness was indeed in my heart, yet my main thought was that I was justly served. Rohan dead; M'Causland in exile; Sir Burleigh on the way to a conflict; myself deserted and despised; a woman, every way my inferior, replacing me in his heart—sure these were enough of the bitter waves of expiation to at once roll in on the startled and dismayed memory, consciousness, of anyone!

"Say farewell!" He knelt and took my hands. "Helen, you are in the wrong to accuse me of changing. In all the world there is no one I love as I love you! If I am killed to-night, my last thought will be yours and—and Rohan's. I think of him often. When I see you happy, forgetful of the past, of my claim on your love

the bitter thought recurs, 'If he had but lived, Helen could not torture me; love for him would keep alive love for me.' "

At this appeal my tears flowed fast. I realised that beneath all the chances and changes of his variable temperament, he was not truly inconstant; that his eyes might wander, yet his heart be fixed; his affections waver, his love remain my own. For the thousandth time we ended mutual recrimination by renewed amity, and took hopeful leave of each other.

Ten o'clock saw the city denuded of troops, swift and silent, the march southward to the hills. Lady Kilmarnock and I went without the city-walls in her chariot, and, leaving it, walked awhile beside the swift torrent of marching men, which passed us as a river passes the passenger on its banks, as time passes the milestone-years. 'Twas a dark, still night—the light elastic tread of the Highland clans made but little noise. The clatter of Kilmarnock's dragoons could be heard over all. He passed us unseeing.

"Thank God!" said Milady Kilmarnock.

"You had better come with me to Muirhaig," she insisted, as we re-entered the city. "In any event we are safer there. We can drive near to Holyrood, and bring Saunder with us to carry

such things as we need for a week. Pearlie Cameron is coming, so that will be the Prince's first rendezvous."

"A fig for your malice," thought I, agreeing to her proposition with thanks; "Pearlie Cameron, her blue frock and red hair, may come by dozens now," and re-entering Holyrood we despatched Saunder and a footman well laden to the chariot, and, taking all our jewels with us, followed, waking no echoes round the quiet palace—a spot on which now the city's thousand eyes would be fixed. By dawn we had reached Muirhaig, and found a clan of female Camerons domiciled, with the red Pearl in their midst, as handsome as ever, but a trifle sullen at the cutting-short of the Holyrood festivals. To my amusement, and also that of Milady K., she immediately attached herself to me, as artlessly as before; and my influence reached a point at which I aimed—that if I gave the word she would wear blue.

"That is mean," thought I, with some compunction, wandering out without my hood, in the still hot September sun, a habit long ago acquired at the Manor. Mistress Pearlie followed suit.

"My dear," said I, "you will get freckled and hideous."

"I do not care," was her sullen reply, "everybody is always thinking of my complexion;

'twere as well freckled as not. If anyone is to love me it must be freckled or no."

"No," said I, "'twere a pity to spoil so pretty a picture," and twisting my silk kerchief into a cap, I put it on to shade her face—simply as I would have drawn a blind between a Titian and the sun. Unused to restraint, resenting guidance, she soon contrived to lose it in the wild moorland of the park, with the result that the ivory of her skin showed a shower of irregular yellow patches—produced, so those learned in physiology say, by the iron more present in the blood of Dane-coloured folk than in others—in a great measure marring her beauty. At this I was the more concerned than her own people, who, all being freckled as cowslips, held it a sign of health and strength, nor at all deemed it a drawback to beauty. The third day, hearing a frantic Babel of Scots tongues as I came down to breakfast, I was saluted on all hands on entering the room—

"'Tis a victory! They have won!—all killed or prisoners! Bless bonnie Prince Charlie! They will win hame to-day, to-morrow to begin the march London-wards. We will to Edinburgh to meet them!" And off this undocile rabble flew, to prepare, Scots fashion, for travelling—tinker fashion we English

would call it, for no Scot, still less a Highlander, has patience for neatness. Therefore the well-laden chariots, as each rolled off, presented rather the fashion as of highborn camp followers with their rolled-up spoil.

Even Lady K., usually methodical enough and to spare, was a sharer in the general excitement, and less trim than usual.

I stayed behind by choice. To my English fastidiousness this rush to meet the victors was too ungentle in its haste.

For myself, I would have flown, had I had silver wings, to alight quietly in their midst.

"It is very charming," I reflected, sitting in the now empty house, "to read, but I could not alight in a tumbled satin sacque from the midst of unwieldy boxes, bundles, to greet an archangel, new come from a victory over Lucifer." The book I held was Milton—hence these metaphors.

For hours the silence and loneliness of the house was unbroke. I strayed out into the solitude of the park, half wishing I had flown with the crowd. They, at least, had shown their zeal and love; mine were as bright, as strong as theirs; yet, wandering on, I felt dissatisfied.

The golden autumn day drew near its close. Was Sir Burleigh angry, that he had not come for me, or had mere weariness withheld him?

Silence held the place like an enchantment; evening mists, light and veil-like, were rising as I retraced my way within doors; stars in crowds came out in the clear sky; the amber of after-glow lingered in the west. A large fire blazed on the hearth as I entered. I quickened my steps. Two figures stood before me, the one perceptibly supported by the other—'twas Sir Burleigh and Kilmarnock.

"I knew she would be here." Sir Burleigh's voice was faint and changed. I stopped short; an unutterable dread seized and overpowered me. No, 'twas no material wound that cast that grey hue on his face. He had been to battle with the rest, bearing his hurts with him; had escaped lance and sword-thrust, as only those foredoomed may; had charged for Scotland's rightful Prince, with his heart broken; had held up proudly and bravely before all men in the teeth of disappointment and despair.

He had been ill, he told me briefly, before the battle, yet not so as to incapacitate him from, on partial recovery, fighting, though the Prince had begged him not. "Now," said he, "Nell, my darling, I have come home to you to die. For thank God I did not fall like a hero, or my misery had been complete—I should have seen you no more."

"You fought like one, Sir Burleigh," says Kilmarnock, obligingly, "nor am I the only one to say so. All our leaders remarked it too."

Yet, not being outwardly hurt, what was this deadly inward corrosive?

* * * * * *

KILMARNOCK TO BALMERINO.

"Holyrood,

"September 17th.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"Pursuant to promise I write to you special particulars of the Council holden here yesterday. I regret that you was not present, as 'twas on a subject which concerns us each one more personally than anything that has yet chanced, namely, the apportionment of the future titles and rewards for services rendered and loyal adherence.

"My dear Bal, it chanced that I was first in the Council Chamber, a couple of secretaries only besides me. Soon S. comes in and takes his place—then Kelly, Pittsligo, the Master of Lovat, Stuart Appin, Macdonald, Ardross, Cromartie, and Sir Burleigh Clifford.

"Well, I felt 'twas a hostile meeting for him, and that the Dukedom he has for so long

counted on would take a braver man than Stuart to bestow—so many adherents of equal value present, and each to be apportioned a molehill, while this favourite should have a mountain. I must tell you, I felt for him. His sweet Duchess is my friend, and to her I would ungrudgingly accord all the honours and titles this world holds; but she cares not for them. 'Tis this ambitious, far-seeing lord of hers who has planned a *coup*, fated to be foiled. Not by me, mark you, nor by you—nor by any man with a heart in his breast who could know how the distresses of this old would-be Duke would distress her. She loves him. That you will say is but right; but by ——! you will reverse that when I tell you that he but married her from an obscure station because her beauty and wit were already over-dear to his Prince. I tell you but truth, but fact, for 'twas in S.'s company I first met her. From him I first learnt that he loved her, and like a thunderclap, which stunned us both in the hearing, came but a few weeks after our first meeting, news that she was Sir Burleigh's wife.

"Now, I ask you to consider me no slanderer when I tell you that, though I battled it out with S. that 'twas best it should be so, yet I felt for him, and bitter incensed with the man

who could thus enter on so close calculation of chances, making an innocent woman his weapon. Yet I strove in the interests of all to see things as the world saw, to persuade S. that there were others as fair and more faithful. No sophistry can blind the heart, and though his love is but slight and unworthy of her, 'tis sincere. I cannot blame him. He would not listen. We could not afford to lose Clifford, nor had no proof against him. S., in his rage and wrath, swore 'twas all her contriving that Clifford was but wax in able hands, and so thinking exonerated him. How he won back the lady let the sequel tell. I say plump, by this Dukedom. Nor am I alone; others surmise it, or are else discontent on other grounds, that so immense a recognition should be given for services—great in some ways, as money and counsel; inferior in others, as chief of a clan must be infinitely of more value.

"Let me get on. He began well enough—the earldoms, baronies, recognition of long service, of faithful adherence, were all read out, gratefully received, highly applauded; but the thundercloud was there, and on S. reading: 'For his faithful and loyal service, for his long fidelity and untiring loyalty, for his many sacrifices in our cause, We hereby create, and cause to be raised to the

rank of Duke, Sir Burleigh Clifford, our loving and trusty friend and counsellor.' A feather might have been heard to fall, for the silence that ensued. Kelly was the first to break it. He has a levity, an insolence, that would arraign a decree from heaven, went it against his own feeling ; but here he was supported by the unanimous voice of the rest.

"'Sir Burleigh Clifford a Duke!' said he, 'then by—— I'll not remain Earl only. And Sir,' to S., 'since we are here in Council, and to advise on what passes before us, I, on my part, though with no unfriendly feeling to Clifford, advise this intended honour to be reconsidered. A Barony, such as was at first mooted all would heartily agree to ; a Dukedom, for my part, no.' 'Thus say I, and I, and I.' The fierceness of consentaneous accord in endeavouring to veto this bestowal, roused S. to that pitch of immovable obstinacy and wrath which we all know. 'This,' said he, 'though communicated, is in nowise in the power of any here, myself least of all, to alter or arraign. Gentlemen, I venture to remind you that though invested now with plenary powers, it is not retrospective. All these honours have been bestowed long since, and though heartily agreeing to all and every one of them, in communicating them to you I am

in this but as any other secretary. We will now, therefore, go to business which is in our province —premising that your commentary on this Dukedom shall be duly transmitted to France, to my father, who bestowed it, and his counsellors who ratified the bestowal.'

"All listened attentively, silenced, yet furious. Some other business was transacted, but all minds were so at work on the one point that they agreed to any who spoke, ratified or negatived as they were directed, like men drunk or asleep.

"Then, ere the Council broke up, Sir Burleigh rose. Again there was a silence, as of death. He addressed Stuart alone, who, white to the lips, the beaded drops on his brow, looked down. 'Sir,' said he, 'I cannot let this Council close without first humbly, gratefully, and from my heart, thanking our King, through you, for the recognition you were willing to make for service rendered. It is to me matter of gratitude to be so thought of. The service—which was rendered without thought of reward, humbly and loyally, as a true subject—I rejoice in its being in my power to have given. The gracious recognition of it I thank you for, but for the present decline as too great for my deserts, and as thereby inducing discord and discontents amongst your Highness's friends. Let me beg that, together

with these dissenting voices, my resolve be transmitted to France.'

"This, which took us all by surprise—me not the least—produced an immense reaction in Clifford's favour, which a conciliatory speech from S. might—for I meant to back him—have ended all well.

"But, dismissing the Council with the customary thanks, no sooner are we alone than he turns fiercely on Clifford.

"'To be,' says he, raging up and down, 'drove to renunciation of what I have worked so untiringly to obtain for you by that blatant beast, Kelly! To be quelled by a herd of Highland cattle! My God, that now I should be forced to submit to this for an hour! It shall not end here. God grant me success! if but to avenge this insult, and others they have now the will to put upon me.'

"Sir Burleigh sat down, his face working, a terrible grief in his eyes.

"Into the midst—having, doubtless, watched the Council disperse, and always and ever assured of a welcome—came Milady Clifford. Ah, Bal! could you but have seen her, you would wonder how any earthly gift could atone for her loss, or be withheld to gain her.

"By——! I absolved S. on the spot; but 'twas

not of him she thought. Looking round to be assured no stranger was nigh, she goes up to Clifford. 'So,' says she, 'being now a Duke you are too great to see me.' And with that pats his grey rugged head, with wistful and anxious tenderness. Then, seeing his face, gives a low, terrified cry.

"'What is it?' says she. 'What is amiss? What have you done to him?' She turns helplessly to Stuart, a sudden horror in her eyes and voice. 'Ah, my dear! do not mind them. I will take care of you, as you have ever of me. He is ill. Will none help him?'

"By this we see 'tis a fit. His eyes roll backward, his lips are clenched, and but for S., who supports it, chair and Clifford would be on the ground.

"I come to their aid, unloose his cravat, lie him flat on the floor, and blood him, opening a vein with my penknife. For an hour we watch in vain—no word even whispered. Then, with a groan, he revives, and, seeing only her whom he has wronged, is content—content to be borne to his room, for we call in a couple of footmen. I and my valet undress and get him to bed. Then milady coming in sits beside him, and he sleeps. But I thought of an angel watching a sepulchre. For she is guiltless in all this—

a snow-white dove, offered a sacrifice on the altar of ambition. Oh that I could bear her grief for her! I can write no more of Councils, assure you. In haste I close this, which is for your eye alone, and no others. This I trust to your honour to straitly observe.

"Yours,

"KILMARNOCK."

* * * * * *

Haggard and grey, and alone but for me, Sir Burleigh and I are at Muirhaig. Since that Council, where the miserable and mean jealousy of men grudged him a reward all too small for his love and loyalty—since then he has been ill with an illness that alarms me. 'Tis not that he is confined to bed—his strong frame and active habits forbid that—but his heart is hurt. It wrings mine to note his dejection, his sunk spirits. I cheer him to my best ability, yet, seeing his melancholy smile, his absent though fond air, tears gush from mine eyes, and he it is who has more often to comfort me.

"Cheer up, little Duchess," he will say—for his thoughts will dwell on the rankling wound he has received—"all will yet be well. Nell, you cannot blame my resigning an honour grudged to me by the rest—do not you be discontent, dear."

As if I should! Was Sir Burleigh a beggar, an outcast, a prisoner in a dungeon—he would be ever and always my dear and kind master and husband; I, his faithfullest friend and companion. Yet I am frightened for him. To me he seems to get thinner, to eat less, to have half given over his doze of afternoons; to care nothing for wine or whist, for talk of the Manor, for news from France or from the Highlands; to care nothing for Stuart's letters, who writes often, one of which, watching him, I saw him as he sat alone put unopened into the fire, with an angry and lowering brow. I went in on the instant.

"My dear," says he, "I want much to see Sergius. Will you write to him for me, and pray his coming soon?"

"Yes" said I dejectedly—for 'twas his will he had been altering with Kilmarnock's aid, and of this I was aware, though to me he had not spoke of it. A will! I shuddered. Of what use to think of such things, save to increase melancholy? By-and-by, the letter finished and despatched to Edinbro', I came in again, and found him, to my alarm, more dejected, sitting beside the fire, his eyes hid by his hand.

"Dear," said I tenderly, "the sun is shining without. Shall we not rather enjoy its

warmth than a fire's? Come into the air for awhile."

I wanted to draw him from sad thoughts, from dejection.

"Ah, little Duchess," said he, "my sun has set."

I own that was too much for me. I forgot both sun and moon, and with my arms about him railed on Stuart for his cruelty, for I knew 'twas this dukedom had hurt him so. Presently I grew calmer, listening while he spoke.

"Helen," said he, "I have now but little heart or courage, yet that wanes day by day. The end is not far off, and I would not have you —me dead—believe that I have ever wronged you."

"Stop!" said I. "Oh, my dear, though an angel from heaven came to tell me ill of you, I would not listen, nor credit it. Why do you so undervalue my love? I will not listen to you against yourself. Tell my crimes, reproach and condemn me—for so much goodness from one human creature to another, as yours to me, cannot be. You mean now to be angry, to kill me."

"Could I take you with me, I would," said he. "But, Nell, beseech you, since you will not let me speak, do not believe I ever meant ill to

you, or married you, save from pity and love, my dear."

"I do not," said I. "Oh, my dear, that you should have married me to your hurt, kills me."

"Helen, you have been the happiness of my life. Was a thousand years granted me without you, or ten with, I would take the ten."

I poured out and held some wine to his lips, they trembled so; then kissed them softly, again and again.

"I love you!" I said, with every slow kiss, "and I am no professor, Sir Burleigh."

Then for awhile melancholy fled away. He knew I loved him; and I, that let who would slander him, no shadow of a shade rested on his honour to me. It was piteous that I, who would have died for him, should be at once the barb of the arrow his enemies had sent to his heart; yet he forgave me, as another was once forgiven, "in that I loved much," all my sins against him.

Next day came Kilmarnock, who cheered him up, though he could not dispel my melancholy; and, Sir Burleigh away, completed it by insisting on the necessity of the will being finished and signed.

"It may prove but a form," said he, "yet is better done, in these times, than left in doubt or confusion."

So, ended and witnessed, 'twas sent off to France to M'Causland's care, after which Sir Burleigh seemed happier.

"Your comfort is ensured Helen, let what will happen."

"And," thought I, holding his rapidly-wasting hands, "you do not yet know that my comfort will end for ever should you leave me."

Stuart came once. He was gloomy and angry, more concerned that he had suffered defeat, than at Sir Burleigh's grief and illness; though later on he grew a little touched on seeing how manifestly heartbroke he was, and endeavoured to comfort him by swearing with an oath he did not mean to be beat, or have Kelly crowned king and dictator.

"'Tis but to wait awhile, sir. We will yet reconcile these malcontents to your promotion, or by——! suffer them to grieve over it at their leisure."

"My promotion is coming fast, sir," said Sir Burleigh. "Meanwhile do not concern yourself more with this title. I no more grudge its loss, to help you on, than the rest of my sacrifices."

At thought of them Stuart was moved, and exerted himself to be gracious and loving, expressing his gratitude, and calling up for

himself hopes of being better able to ensure their reward.

"Sir," said Sir Burleigh, more firmly and commandingly than he had ever yet suffered himself to speak to him, "do not think of this again to be vexed by it. I have acquitted you of blame. 'Twas your zeal that, in fact, enraged them to contend it. That I have looked forward to it is true, yet now I would not that things should be other than as they stand. My reward to me for helping you is in my conscience; was it to act over again, I should not slack in zeal or service. Do you, therefore, on your part, knowing we shall meet but little more in this life, renew that promise you long since swore to me."

"I renew it," said he, after a pause. "If I forget it, evade or delay its fulfilment, may God forget me in my need!"

"That, then," said Sir Burleigh, his face old, woebegone, and haggard, so as to strike even a careless eye, "is all I now desire."

A long silence ensued. On either side was no disguising that this was their last earthly meeting. As I sat in the distant window-seat, knitting, shaded by the curtain, scarce drawing breath, each had forgot my presence. I saw Stuart's proud mouth quiver, heard his tone falter as he said:

"Mine was the greater wrong, Sir Burleigh—you cannot doubt that—and, inflicted by you, has been the bitterness of my life."

"Well, well," says he in answer, "that is now past; let it ever become a question for casuists. 'Tis now the bitterness of my death that I sacrificed her, believing it for her happiness, as in part it was. Yet we are no priests, Casimir, or I had seen her misery unmoved, and you regarded your friend more than your love. As to this slander," said he presently, suddenly and vehemently, "you know how, before even seeing her, Denzillac was mooted, and the Dukedom—'tis infamous!"

"Some of them shall rue it," said Stuart through his teeth; "notably Kelly. But, sir, why do you apprehend this indisposition of yours to be so serious? Life, without my oldest friend, will be but dismal."

"My dear lad," said Sir Burleigh, "you will, long before my age, find friends' loss but a momentary pain. They go their way, as on a journey, you yours. To part with one we love is very different—'tis part of ourselves, a limb, an eye, our very heart and life sometimes—as now."

A mournful and saddened silence followed. Like the guilty wretch I was, I sorrowed over this parting, which, but for me, might have been

so kindly different; as it was, 'twas melancholy, each concluding the other wanting forgiveness and according it. "While," thought I, as they clasped hands and parted, "had I never existed, they had been true friends to the end of time. Sure there there is no need of hell, since guilt thus expiates itself!" Big tears blotted from my sight Stuart's image as he rode away.

* * * * * *

The next day came Porteous. He was cheerful, his hands were full of work, and though he could but ill-spare the time, he came by Stuart's desire to see Sir Burleigh. On coming from his room he looked very grave.

"He cannot recover," said he. "I am sorry, my dear, but 'tis hopeless, and the certainty gives greater time for settling all worldly affairs. Yet be cheerful with him; excitement may bring on a second attack, and so yet further shorten his life by a day."

Like one condemned I crept away, as Doctor Porteous went off to Edinbro', happy enough in his trade. Men die every day, his air and tone seemed to say; yet air or tone mattered not to me, 'twas the dreadful certainty of the words crushing my heart. For awhile, in my despair, I could not go to him. How could I see that familiar and beloved face change? Then, hovering nigh,

I heard him ask for me, and hurried in, afraid of a second's loss of time so fast ebbing away. Sergius was with him—an orderly was at the door awaiting him.

"'Tis a message from the Prince," said he to Sir Burleigh. "He would himself come were it possible, but the march south begins this week, and he can scarce leave command for an hour. He hopes to learn of your speedy restoration to health."

Sir Burleigh listened in indifferent and acquiescing silence.

"The lad is right," said he, "to remain at his duty, I can spare him. Helen is all I want now."

Kilmarnock withdrew, whether to go or not I did not conjecture—all was to me lost in that moveless figure on the bed. His thoughts wandered to memories of the Manor, to old scenes. He spoke of Craig, of Janet, desiring me to provide for them; of M'Causland, and of Verney Clifford.

"Give him this," said he, drawing off his signet ring. "Verney. He is not all bad, Helen, and granting him Hanover, is saying the worst of him can be said. Yet the Manor remains with the Cliffords through it, and his convictions were sincere against our cause. He loved you, Helen, in his way, and there's worse than

Verney. Bid him a kind farewell from me; he is not forgot in my testament, yet you, as 'tis right, have the bulk. You will be a rich woman, Helen. God grant I had placed you safely in France; but M'Causland is not far to seek, and you must go to him. Sergius hath undertaken charge of you; he loves you as a brother might; be obedient to his counsel, sweet. Oh, my dear, that I might live to take care of you myself! I love you dearly, Helen, though I fear have been but as a rough gaoler."

"No, no," I caressed his fast-fading face with my hand, softly, keeping back tears lest they should distress him, "you have been but too good to me, sir."

Then memory of all his great goodness rushed in overwhelming tide on me; hysteric sobs nigh choked me as, kneeling, I begged forgiveness for being so worthless a wretch; then, checked at sight of his grief for me, tried to be calm, as Porteous bade me. So the slow hours went on. Sergius was untiring in his kindness. I could not move, nor dared relinquish his hand for a moment, lest the darkened eyes should reproach me.

Presently he spoke of me to himself, softly, as of a beloved remembered name.

"Helen Rohan—but she is here," he went on

in a faithful rapture. "Here through all chance and change. Still with me. My darling, are you sorry you married me?"

"No," said I in bitter grief, "but you will be. Forgive me. I—I did not mean to deceive, to degrade you. 'Twas as one clings to a helping hand in a whelming sea."

"You did not deceive me, my dear, and if any hold me degraded for showing mercy to you, then I envy him not his conscience. Was I to see you die? Why 'tis my most consoling thought that I have made you happy. What worldly honour would comfort me was your dead face to haunt my pillow? What happiness is equal to having your sweet eyes watch over me, your warm soft hands in mine? You have, assure you, been my happiness. My great dread at Prestonpans was lest I should not again see you. Sergius managed that, he is a noble fellow, death is less bitter from knowing him your friend." Into the firelit room, strange shadows came, haunting memories, remorseful thoughts.

"Why have I not been better to you," I cried out, "more tender, more loving? Oh! my dear, that I could make amends, thank you enough for all your great love and tender patience! I love you, let that expiate my faults."

"It doth," said he fondly, "but you have no faults to me, sweet rose; let who else may judge me, you will know I was tender to you. Tell M'Causland I took care of you, loved you to the last, my darling."

His eyes closed; as I held his hand his voice grew fainter and lower, he seemed to be sinking into a deep, dreamless sleep. I stooped to kiss his lips and felt their last warmth ebbing from them; their icy coldness struck to my heart. With a wild and piercing cry of bitter woe, I found myself alone. Sir Burleigh was dead!

* * * * * *

How the news sped to Edinburgh I know not; probably Doctor Porteous, even in parting, knew recovery to be hopeless.

Sergius had not gone. At the wild cry I uttered on realising his death whom I loved, he came in. I was kneeling beside Sir Burleigh, my face hid on his still-warm breast, my arms about his neck.

"He has forgiven me!" I rose, at Kilmarnock's entreaty, facing him with tears falling heavily and continuously. "Thank God he could! None other would in all the world. Oh, my dear! my dear! who saved me from destruction, let me die with you. Who loves me as you did? Take me with you to the

grave—you cannot leave me, it is too cruel! No one else in the whole world but condemns me, and I you—forgave—pardoned." Hours passed, as I knelt, bathing the cold face in repentant tears, kissing the stern and rigid lips which had never spoken aught but kindness and affection to me, never uttered a reproach, been gentle always and merciful. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Lady Kilmarnock stood beside me.

"Go away," said I feverishly, "I will come to you; I have not long to be with him now."

"Go, my dear," said Doctor Porteous, "with milady, I must for awhile be alone here. You shall come again, in an hour, or less. Now, this is childish, 'twould displease him; go for awhile."

Blinded, and with a heart that beat wildly, I took milady's guiding hand, stumbling along the corridor to another parlour, into which the gorgeous hues of sunset poured unchecked.

"I wonder where he is," said I, looking with aching eyes westward. "He must remember me—he has known me so long. Why could I not go with him? he would like it. 'Helen Rohan'—'a starched minx'—and other names he used to call me. Is it not hard that he must be silent and other people speak? It is too unjust—why should he die? He has been so good

to me—so good; why am I not to repay him? Where is the justice of taking him away from this earth, where he was happy with me? He will be lonely, away from all he loved. Oh, my God! take me with him—Sir Burleigh, Helen Rohan—why do you part them while others are let to live? What harm has he done, save to show mercy? Oh, my dear! come back for me; come back and take me with you. Who has loved me like you? My God! if there be any harsh judgment, let it fall upon me, justly. Oh, my dear, my dear!"

Lady Kilmarnock knelt beside me, soothing with hand and voice. "Come and dream of him," she said at length, and, wretched and worn out, led me to my room, where, with essences and scents sleep-compelling and quieting, all sense of desolateness fled for awhile, yet the brain, stamped with one thought, brought his face before me as in life, comforting the heart that even in sleep ached, and would have mourned for all it had lost of love and tenderness, of patience and unvarying goodness, in loving him.

Yet a few days, and Sir Burleigh—carried to the grave by Kilmarnock, the Earl of Kelly, Balmerino, and a Douglas, who was also noble—rested beneath the giant pines of Muirhaig. A

military funeral was accorded him, but vetoed by me.

Why seek by useless pomp to disturb the quiet dignity of death?

All were kind and pitying to me. Each spoke of him as of a brother. He was ever a favourite with men, an infallible test of merit in a man, so Balmerino told me.

"He needed no test," said I, "he had a heart of gold."

"He had," said Balmerino heartily. "I have known Burleigh Clifford for years upon years, and never knew him wrong anyone. Do not weep, Lady Clifford. He died as a brave man would wish to die—in his country's cause. He has gone to his rest with all honour. And if men will marry young wives—why, some must be widows. For my own part, my old countess will not give me a chance. How did you meet with Sir Burleigh?"

"I did not meet with him." I raised my tear-sprent eyes to Balmerino's face, half in amaze at his cheery tones. "I grew up with him. I was always near him. It is dreadfully hard to miss him."

"Yes," said he. "But, my dear, it is fortune of war. I may go to-morrow—or Kilmarnock."

Involuntarily I shivered and looked round for

Kilmarnock. Now Sir Burleigh had gone, who was safe?

Balmerino had by chance strayed into the sunny parlour. I was not in black garb, having none, but in the snowy silk that had been with Sir Burleigh so great a favourite, a black ribbon at my waist and on my neck, another in my hair.

"She is a lovely woman," I heard Balmerino say as they were mounting. "And well left, I hear—all the Clifford wealth, realised long ago, and safe in France. I wish I was a young fellow and unmarried."

"That needs not in the bond," said Kelly, smiling, "Kil is her favourite—saw it at the march-past—ask him."

Balmerino seemed but little inclined to do this as Kilmarnock joined them, and they rode off—with their worldly thoughts for company, Kilmarnock presently returning.

He was loftily above the hypocrisy of going to Edinburgh to defer to idle gossip, choosing rather, as a true friend, to help and comfort me. Milady K. was also very good to me, and the slow first days of bereavement, with their dull ever-present pain, were lightened by her sweet sympathy.

"What do they call the battle where he died?" I asked one day of milady.

"Prestonpans," said Sergius, looking up from a formidable-looking letter he was reading.

"My dear," said milady, "several hundreds died there, do not think yours a lonely grief, hundreds of brave men have ever died in war—alas for us women!"

"Kil, is that to call you to the front? I am only surprised you gain such great leave, or take it, for that is what you are doing—'tis not altogether right, neither."

"They are but marching," shrugged Kilmarnock, "and have generals enough without me. Murray is a host in himself. Depend on it I will be there for the fighting. 'Tis but an extra gallop. I have, besides, work in Edinburgh. 'Tis not holiday with me, believe me I go all too soon."

"All too soon for me always," she said tenderly. I closed my eyes wearily. "Why was I alone for ever?"

"You are tired, my dear." Lady K. rose, and gave me her hand. "Come with me now, you are a good obedient girl, I will sit with you till you sleep."

I bade Sergius good-night mournfully. When he had gone loneliness would indeed be mine. The sleep of exhaustion held me awhile. Awaking, I heard without in the wild park an

autumn wind-storm surging and moaning through the trees.

"He will be lonely," thought I in a sort of horror of Sir Burleigh. "That will awake him and I not near. Oh, my dear, if I forget you may God forget me!" and, hastily dressing, I wrapped a plaid round me and sought his grave.

The moonlight fell upon it, beyond were darkest shadows from the trees. All around, lovely in the soft light, lay the wild park-land. The wind swept boisterously over all the heavens and the earth, hurrying on the playful clouds, bending the sullen pines, which murmured at its imperious sway. It was a lovely scene; as I sat with arms crossed on it beside the grave, all thought of pain for Sir Burleigh ceased. He was not in the earth—but there—where infinite worlds glistened. He would not care to count the flying years. What was earthly life to an immortal? "My dear," said I, "if you hear me, forgive me every thought that is not of you. I would have died for you, as you must know. I loved you; whatever other love you gain, give a thought to mine." A thousand sorrowful thoughts flew by on the wind, a few that were of joy. He had forgiven and loved me to the last. My head sank on the ill-laid turf, and I slept a sweet and dreamless sleep, companioning for

the last time my dear and beloved Sir Burleigh.

They could not linger, those two whose kind presence had kept me from despair, or death. For the rest of the world, what was the life, the death of a Clifford, when so many were slain, when the fierce tide of invasion, the fury of anticipated battles, sent men's blood surging through their veins, kept alive and active their scorn of death?

No word came from Stuart; Sir Burleigh might have been the meanest and least loyal adherent of the cause—an unnoted clansman. This silence none amazed me. He was in the turbulent and hurrying torrent of active war; perchance had scarce heard, heeded, or realised his friend's death. What did it matter?

Loud lament, solemn requiem, poignant grief, all were now alike to him; day by day I sat beside the grave; night by night I wandered to it, ten thousand grief-fed thoughts, memories, bringing ever before me the lost friend! Oh! that he might return but for a day that I might crowd into it the utterance of my love for him!

Lady K. had sent a couple of her domestics, a staid mother and daughter, whom I seldom saw. I lived alone as in an enchanted house—alone with my grief and memories.

The white silk robe was now stained and sullied with the damp earth of the new mound, yet I held to it—he had liked it.

No one came to Muirhaig. For all active participation in life I might have been dead, too. I wearily wished it had been so, and to myself carried on an interminable argument—was it best Sir Burleigh had died first, or I? How would he now have been stifling in lonely grief as I was, with none to console him, perhaps hurried hither and thither in the midst of men who could none of them feel for him. This picture made me a little resigned that mine should be the bitterness of loss, of sorrow; since a woman may, unrebuked, hide her sorrow in loneliness, where a man would be blamed for inaction, perchance scoffed at for his broke heart.

Wandering, ill and listless, near the grave, as though some ill-defined hope of its being an unreality haunted me, I saw, with my dimmed and tired eyes, a servant approaching; 'twas the woman who waited on me. She carried a letter, silk-tied and sealed with black, with the Clifford crest. 'Twas from Verney Clifford, who wrote:

"My dear Helen,

"Aunt no longer, now he is dead. I am sorry for you, and sorry for my uncle, who was

ever good to me till he married you, and not much worse then, as I feared he might prove, yet not so as we always were friends, you and I. Much he has gained by being a Jacobite, as I told him times and again; but he was stubborn, and you also. Have you his Will? You are doubtless well cared for; but whether that be so or no, come, my dear, and live with us at the Manor; 'tis your natural home; and was you without a penny, by ——! I would welcome you for his sake that loved you. If Fernie tries by any tricks to drive you thence, 'twill but be the worse for her. Was you not there first and always? so whose is best right to it? Yours, I say. My poor uncle! He would like to know you was at the Manor and taken care of. 'Twas with him of late nothing but Helen, from morning till night. He was in the right of it; was anyone married to a woman like Fernie they would say the same. Do not grief overmuch, my dear; being older than you 'twas natural he should go first, anyway; and he has seen his hopes of the Jacobites succeed, the country is full of fear of them. If you come and they come, 'twill be the better for us you are here. But that's not it; was you only Helen Rohan still, you should find a home here, let who might object—as Fernie sure will, for she says so.

Never mind her; you shall find you have—for my uncle's sake, for whom I again say I grieve—a true friend and kinsman in your ladyship's humble servant and nephew, and his.

"VERNEY CLIFFORD.

"Burleigh Manor."

Poor Verney! I smile at this letter, as mixed in phrases as in motives—some of it sincere enough. Verney wants to know how far he may safely go in conciliating the now victorious Jacobites he has formerly despised—be recommended to the Prince, whose life he aimed so treacherously against; wants to know if I can shield him from loss of the Manor—yet would have sent precisely the like cordial sympathy, the same kind offer of a home, had I been indeed in want of it.

This kindness, so unexpected, brought a gleam of warmth to my heart. 'Twould have pleased Sir Burleigh that for his sake I was remembered. I laid the letter on the grave, as I should have put it in the strong hand of Burleigh Clifford. We had always been in good accord, this was proof—for scarce the fear of instant annihilation would wring a civil insincerity from Verney. A wounding and cruel one at any time had been ready; but Thersites' self had

found it as difficult to coin a flattering lie. I sighed as I re-read the letter. He was malcontent, unhappy. Who in all the world was happy now?

I went within doors rather more actively than of late. Life will not, do what one may, too long companion death. Or is it that death, as we image it, is but an abstraction of our own creation; that the life we mourn has but changed to some other sphere? And in our souls we feel it to be so, and the unreality of our imaginings.

In a metaphysic mood I again scanned Verney's letter. He was not used to express any emotion that had not its groundwork in anger or malice. His brief lament for Sir Burleigh was but characteristic, nor, from him, unfeeling.

'Twould be at least to live with one who had known Sir Burleigh and valued him. I reclined, weak and listless, on a couch drawn near the fire, letter in hand, and thought of it. I could not stay at Muirhaig too long alone, nor—here tears dropped slowly from my tired eyes—could I bear the thought of leaving the new-made grave. The letter falling from my hand fluttered to and fro in a light draught of air from the door.

"I am alone," sobbed I aloud. "Oh, Sir Burleigh, was it well done to leave me! Oh, my dear—'tis not in reproach—but who ever cared for me as you did?"

Night fell dark and wintry. The servants brought in a tray with dinner—a wretched; solitary, and dismal meal, as for a prisoner; then, being allowed, retired to bed in some distant rooms. I did not need their ministry. Solitude was all I craved, and the forgotten food remained unheeded on the table. Tears were my meat now, day and night, like the Psalmist.

In this solitary dwelling I was as much alone as in a grave. All seemed to have deserted me. Mine eyes refused at last to shed more tears, and burning and weary, closed. I did not sleep, nor think. In utter desolation one only feels a want, a woe, which is intangible, yet stifles and stills all pulse of pain, and is itself worse than pain.

Without, nothing but dreary winds, darkness, and a grave; within, desolation. Oh, for but one hour of that love and care lost now for ever! For but one caress, one assurance of forgiveness.

I heard no outer doors opened, no voices of inquiry, of arrival, no sound of horse-hoofs on the turf without. Yet, hearing the door of the parlour opened, supposed the servant come to remove the untasted dinner, perchance with some dim sympathy in my woe, bent on bringing a living presence before me. Poor wretches! they could not know how dearer to me than any living was the dead.

Hearing no further movement for awhile I looked up. Not a little to my surprise, 'twas Kilmarnock. Yet not surprise neither. All was too faint to be a feeling. An impression haunted me for a moment that I ought to feel surprise. I did not speak, as he came slowly forward.

He seated himself, and picked up Verney's letter to restore to me.

"Read it," said I, too tired to inquire why he had come.

"Helen," said he, putting it aside after reading, "I have come to take you to Edinbro'. I cannot nor will see you dying here alone, killing yourself with futile grief. He asked me to befriend you. My dear, his wish should weigh with you, and a few more days spent thus would kill you."

"That is no matter." I shifted my head and tired eyes from his gaze. "Sergius, you should not have come, I mind being forgot now no more than he does."

"But I mind you dying," said he decidedly. "I mind that Sir Burleigh's appeal to me to befriend you, should weigh with you. You have been alone too long, my dear; coming in you alarmed me. My dear, I have no time, no words to waste, I ought to be with the army on its march south."

"I wish you were," said I. "What are armies or friends to me? Milord, I am too tired to talk, why will you torment one who is dying? What is it to me to wander here or there? I am best alone."

To entreaties, prayers, I would make no answer. The moaning of the wind outside moved me to more thought than the complaining voice within.

"Are you still there?" said I wearily, after a long silence. "Oh, Sergius, if you would only go. The army wants you. I am not angry, but tired; life is too rough, if I die I shall not feel this terrible pain. Why will you make me talk? I tell you but plain truth in saying that this even exhausts me. Another time; let me be alone now."

"I cannot," said he, with harsh persistency. "Helen, I may be dead myself ere a week is out, and if any thought come to the dying, mine will be of a neglected duty to you, to Sir Burleigh, in leaving you to perish in this Golgotha, into which you have wandered. You shall return here when you will, but I mean to take you to Edinbro'. You owe obedience to me as his deputy. Will you not obey his last wish, his last words—let me be your friend?"

He knelt beside me, taking my hands perforce

into his warm close grasp, recalling me to a surprised sense of life, of its interests, as a beam from the sun revives a storm-drowned flower bent to the earth. His face, eloquent with sympathy, with friendship, bent near to mine, his kind and true soul in his straight and tender glance. A thousand thoughts of life fluttered to my heart like birds a storm has scattered returning to their home.

"I will come," said I, after awhile, with a sob, "though it seems to me a desertion."

"My dear," said he, "you cannot live on Sir Burleigh's grave. 'Twould but anger him if he knew of this self-indulgent grief, as it would any man who loved you."

"You are not angry?" said I, in appeal. "I see it is selfish, yet how can I help it?"

"Dear, in a thousand ways. Grief is a cobweb, which must be broke away from ere it draws out our heart's blood."

"'Tis the spider does that." I corrected his metaphor, which gave, against sense, the power to the agency, leaving the agent out.

"You are right," said he, rising in some agitation, "'tis the spider—the type of all that is base and worthless, of treachery, of cowardice."

He withdrew, standing over against the fire. Though my head ached, and a thousand invisible

hands seemed to draw me back, I rose and wheeled the couch away, drawing forward the small table and the tray of refreshment. At first he was about to protest against this exertion, then was silent, and at once complied with my desire that he should eat after his long journey. I ate ratafias, whose sweetness pleased me, and drank some wine, sincerely desirous that he might not suffer hunger through my absence from the table.

* * * * * *

Poets, romancists, image the life of Courts, of Princes, to be far away from the roughness, the lesser cares, the minor angers of life; to be for ever soaring in an empyrean of high thoughts, of great ambitions, above the frets and stirs which move or distract others. What they may be when long settled in power, in possession, long incensed by flattery, adulation, 'twas not mine to know.

'Tis true there was ever in Stuart a subtle and impalpable something which others lacked, exerting, perforce, a spell over heart and mind, unconsciously to himself; a great gentleness underlying his roughest moods, as the perfume of a rose its ruffled or wind-stirred leaves. This pertained also to Kilmarnock. Their words might be as those of others of less degree, but

had in their tones a thousand inflections, lending, as they willed it, force or gentleness to their meaning. If, therefore, my unable pen have but ill described them, let it be known that 'tis a property none can describe, blending with and forming an atmosphere around them as beauty doth, of which a bare chronicle but insufficiently sets forth its charms.

Kilmarnock was breakfasting; I, seated listlessly near the fire. To his many remarks he received but random answers; thought was straying otherwhere than in the present. Becoming at length dimly conscious that 'twas his design, in talking, to rob me of the contemplation of my grief, to divert my mind from its memories, my lips parted to frame a remonstrance—to beg him, if he would be so pleased, not to disturb me. The words, faint and faltering, were arrested by the faint thunder of horse-hoofs on the turf, still at a distance.

"Someone is coming," said I, thinking, with a sort of horror, "'tis Stuart."

"I do not hear anything." Sergius thought I referred to the house; then, catching the far-off gallop-sound, his mind formed the same conclusion as to who 'twas approached.

His face became dark and shadowed, as he said, "Helen, do not see him; he has but been

the evil genius of your life. His coming now, without writing, without even a message of sympathy—what is it but an insult? Let me receive him for you—there is yet time to retire."

"There is not," I say listlessly, as his step sounded in the hall. "Hark! he is speaking."

"'Tis but to his groom," said he.

A few seconds, and Stuart reached the half-open door of the breakfast-room, and entering, closed it. Looking at Kilmarnock with withering scorn, as though disdaining speech, he came forward and knelt beside my chair.

"My dear," said he, "is not this better than writing—than sending? Helen, I am here at a fearful risk. Was it known, 'twould cost me the allegiance of thousands. My darling, what have you thought of me—alone with your grief? I tried to get away before, yet, plan as I might, 'twas impossible. Balmerino and Murray helped me, or it had still been quite out of my power."

I could frame no answer; for so long as he spoke I could listen, when he ceased I was dumb.

"Have you," said I at length, whispering and appalled, "forgot your friend?"

"Sir Burleigh?" said he coldly. "No. As my friend I grieve for him; but in standing between us, 'twas an enemy that died with him. That is my best word of Sir Burleigh Clifford. He took

you from me knowingly, iniquitously, a wrong no man could forgive. He is at peace now, I will not speak harshly of him. He was my best friend once—but 'tis not of him I am here to speak, your grief for him shall be sacred to me. Helen, you will come to me now—at last. Now you are free, who can separate us?"

I looked round uneasily for Sergius, these words moved me only to a certain weariness. He had gone.

"Sir Burleigh bid Sergius befriend me," said I. "For the rest, I will stay here, near his grave. I am tired—you tire me with all these words. How can I decide yet?"

"Yet," said he, "is a fortnight. In another seven days we may all be dead. We are running a frightful risk in this invasion of England. Do you think, were the happiness of my life not at stake, I dare be here, or one minute away from the hosts of men who are sacrificing all for me?"

"I am tired," I repeat, in helpless appeal, bewildered by his rapid words, "let us meet a year hence."

"Dear, I will not weary you." He sat down beside me, silent, dejected.

"There is breakfast," I suggested, trying to arouse myself. "Will you not take some?" I rang for fresh coffee, pouring it out with hands

that trembled. "'Tis more with spite than age." I tried feebly for a jest at their shaking, seeing it observed. Then, leaving the table, desired Sergius, who was in the hall, to come in.

He entered, bowing with as ceremonious observance to Stuart as though the other had not seen him, Stuart's stiff salutation and severe glance in nowise disconcerting him. At another time I might have felt the wretchedness of this disunion; now, whilst all was misery, it affected me no more than one more cloud would a stormy sky.

"Why do you stand?" I motioned Sergius to a seat opposite mine, seeing, with solicitude, that he looked angry and troubled; Stuart, as his military superior, might order him hence, and he could but obey. To anticipate this—

"You must give Sergius leave," said I, "he has been helping me. You are Commander, are you not?"

"Yes," he replied sullenly; "but Murray is acting Generalissimo; reason good, I have but little actual experience."

"I have heard, sir, that you went to battle as a mere boy, and acquitted yourself so well as to win praises from veteran soldiers. Sir Burleigh told me so."

"His was a too partial chronicle, I fear. I

did go, and as most would, forgot myself in the conflict—escaping by chance. There is more of chance or fortune in such deeds than true valour, which as often consists in avoiding conflicts as in success in them."

By chance his glance fell on Kilmarnock, whose face flushed.

"Have there been conflicts yet?" he asked bitterly, "if so I have not been advised of it."

"No, sir, there have been no conflicts, or Kilmarnock's dragoons would doubtless have been with their commander, in the van."

"Doubtless," said Sergius disdainfully.

"Sir," said Stuart angrily, "I will not be misunderstood for a moment; if your duties here are ended, as should have been the case a week since, I desire that you rejoin your regiment at once."

"Sir," said Sergius, "I thank you for your extension of leave; my duties here end when Lady Clifford is settled in the family and under the protection of friends. I but wait to escort her to Edinburgh, at the last request of Sir Burleigh Clifford."

"Oh!" said I, "call him Sir Burleigh, it is cruel to speak of him as a stranger. How soon the dead are forgot, my God how soon! Sergius,

I cannot leave Muirhaig." I removed my tear-stained hands from my face. "I meant you to know that I must stay here. Sir Burleigh begged you to protect and care for me here, not in Edinburgh."

"So you are guardian?" In ill-repressed wrath Stuart spoke, as I rose and left the room, unable longer to endure their mutual bitterness. "But rely on it, I will have no new complication. I claim Helen Clifford as my wife; to such claim even your pretensions must submit. It is monstrous that you should be here, now."

"Sir," said Kilmarnock savagely, "I have heard enough. If it be as your wife you claim Lady Clifford, prove your claim; establish it by the mouth of but one credible witness that you have ever regarded her as other than a mistress, and my guardianship naturally lapses. Fail to prove it, and by—— you shall not further embitter and degrade her life. She is very dear to me, and were you ten thousand times better than you are you should not have her on any other terms—nor those—but for the wretched past."

"Witness! I have none but my word. That, Scotch law makes sufficient. I claim Helen Clifford as my wife—you are my witness."

"No," said Kilmarnock. "If you agree so to

claim her, with the sanction of a divine of any Church——"

"I agree, milord, though the sanction of a thousand divines will make it of no more weight, in law, as you know."

"Social law," said Sergius cynically, "is largely matter of public opinion, which is in favour of written contracts. Nor shall any safeguard she may fairly claim be wanting in this, which will at least lift her to a higher level in the eyes of the world."

"But that you have my concurrence," was the reply, "you should prove the futility of your intervention. 'Tis not fear of your power, but love for her, as you very well know."

"Put it on what basis you like," Kilmarnock spoke dejectedly, "I must do what I can for her."

"State, then, sir, your proposed arrangement, our absence being an affair of hours."

"Do you object, then, to a Presbyterian divine?"

"No; but as you are aware, a priest of my own Church only would be recognised as competent."

"I know no priests; nor would trust none of your Church," muttered Sergius—the other appeared not to hear this—"but," he added, "I

have friend, a Presbyter, named Home, who at my instance might come here. He is discreet —no fanatic, but a just, sensible man."

"That is, then, settled," said Stuart. "Kil," he continued, with a perceptible tremor of hesitation in his tone, as though fearing a repulse, "you of all men have least right to the harsh judgment of me you have formed. You knew my helplessness to prevent the Clifford marriage—you knew the whole circumstances—yet have misjudged me, as might some hermit to whom temptations are unknown, throughout. When I have complied to the uttermost with your stipulations and decrees for her security and peace, will you not remove your ban from me, be again my friend?"

"That," was the ungracious answer, "will depend——"

"Upon Helen's approval of me?"

"Yes," said Sergius hoarsely, scarce able to articulate.

"Then," said Stuart indignantly, "I will not stoop to a friendship based thus—not were Helen immortal, infallible. To be tried, tested by a woman's moods! Milord, you might have spared me this insult, 'twas not deserved."

As he faced him his eyes flashed fire.

Kilmarnock's sombre glance calmly met and repelled.

"You know better than that I meant an insult," said he presently, half pityingly; "but that her happiness, so far as 'tis affected by you, is a condition of renewed amity, is true. That I cannot withdraw, heartily desirous as I may be of your regard."

He offered his hand, which, after a manifest struggle with wrath and pride, Stuart grasped; and this patched reconcilement was all that either could attain to, though 'twas on both sides made with sincerity and honour, so far as it went.

Presently Kilmarnock sought me and told me all this, part of which I had overheard.

"I will not listen to it," said I, "nor should you have been so forward to promise this settlement for me—a hasty and ill-thought-out one for all."

"You shall not reject it," said he sternly. "'Tis an honourable settlement of an unheard-of complication, nor could the wisdom of Solomon devise a better. Home, who is but ten miles from here, will come to-night—is already sent for. Do you think it nothing for me to plan thus for you? Is it a time to stand on custom, when any day a sword-thrust may

leave you without a friend's aid or counsel, to drift at his pleasure? He will love you the more, the higher placed you are. For God's sake do not refuse! He has made your consent the price of his restored friendship to me."

I looked up in dull amazement. Sergius' eyes had tears in them, which he dashed away angrily. I thought 'twas lest he should risk Stuart's new-won regard.

"Do you so value his friendship?" I asked trembling. "I thought you loved me best. This is terrible! I will contend no more. Keep his friendship, milord. This wisdom of yours shall not fail for lack of my obedience; yours is truly 'A Statesman's Love,' wisely so. Where is this Prince, this promotion?"

My weary face I hid in my hands. Blindness had been welcome that I might never again see a human face. Sergius sacrificing to his ambition his friendship for me, though to my advancement or happiness, was too bitter.

I knew all the wisdom of the plan, even in my woe and weariness, my indifference to all worldly things. I felt an inability to contend against so manifest a fate. Neither was it, as might be judged, a surprise that, in the rush and tumult of events, grief should be considered ill-

placed if on any count it resisted a present settlement.

Sergius decreed it!

That was hardest, now. Stuart might have demanded, as he had the right, that my faith should be pledged to him ere he again entered on the war. I would not have refused, I could not. Had the days been years it would scarce have seemed more natural than that this claim should be urged, this settlement made. It was no treason to Sir Burleigh. Could he have known it, 'twould but have seemed a natural sequence. A grief that measures itself by days or hours is not more sincere than that whose urn of tears leaves the misted sight a vision of the inevitable future. Yet Sergius might have spared, pitied, driven this settlement away! Alas! while blaming him, I knew that he dared not, for my sake.

"Helen!" a strange voice spoke my name, yet 'twas his, impeded, strangled. I looked up dully to listen. There was no other uttered word, only the heavy heart-throbs, audible, distinct, sending the panting breath in slow sobs through his lips. The grey and dying hue of his face, the marvel of his anguished eyes, the greater marvel of the hands outstretched, as to repel my approach, though I had not risen—

hands on which, as furrows on a frozen field, the veins stood out, dark and rigid.

"Do not come near me—do not speak. Go —go!" but half articulate, the convulsed voice, the rigid hands trying helplessly to aid its expression.

In terror for him I obeyed, passing out and closing the door.

A burst of hysteric sobs greeted the clang of the closing door. I had been rough, that any sound might break the spell of that voiceless despair.

"Only a Statesman's love!—only!" For more than an hour I heard this moaned out in a voice such as one might image as the wail of a lost soul.

"Only a Statesman's love!" Ere long words had ceased. Such frightful conflagration of nerve, of heart, of brain, cannot last" thought I, re-entering, swift and silent as a spirit, wearying for pardon from him. Sergius was seated, physical sign of anguish banished, save from the eyes.

"I did not mean to hurt you!" I smoothed the clustering hair from his forehead. "I am a criminal, an assassin, a wretch unfit to live! Slow to hear as deaf adders; swift with poisoned, deadly words. If I might die now,

only die! I have, like a cobra, struck my dearest friend."

"Do cobras so?" The trembling lips smiled.

"Charmides, I was mad; my dear, forgive me!"

"It was hard, Helen, to be doubted by you when doing my best for your happiness."

This he said brokenly, faintly, as, exhausted and weary, he leaned back.

"I did not doubt—I did not want the happiness. Why should I be forced upon him? Nor will I!"

"Charmides, will you not trust me? It must be. He loves you, Eros; here, in this wretched world, you will never fold your wings in perfect peace. Sweet, come nearer and whisper."

"My dear," said I laughing, "do you think we shall ever be there?"

"Yes," said he, "and you have promised. I often dream of it."

"You may," said I despondently; "in all your life you have been noble; but what a little, trembling, ignoble spirit would mine seem, even was it feathered!"

A burst of laughter from Kilmarnock greeted this protest—nay, he had to rise and stamp about the room, for still the peals of laughter would rise like waves of sound, peal upon peal.

I smiled too, happy that the storm ended thus.

"Charmides," said he presently, and querulously, "one may laugh in one's death hour, should some ludicrous idea occur to the mind; yet I am very miserable. In the morning I must go; our future meetings will depend on the caprice of Stuart."

"That you need not believe," said I, "for I am no puppet to abide by another's laws, nor will he require it to be so; should he, 'twill but be to be disappointed."

"To you it may seem so now, yet his influence will become paramount."

"Never! Dismiss that thought; as little as in the past will any influence prevail against you. You may become indifferent, alienated; to me our friendship is not a thing of time."

"Helen," said he, presently, "Casimir has no money, yours is in France. I will therefore give you an order on my banker, Paterson, that you may draw to the extent of my credit with him. M'Causland can repay me at any time, or, if I die, Boyd will be advised of your indebtedness to my estate."

"I can write," said I, "to M'Causland."

"That will involve delay; you must have immediate funds. It is all right; but do not

mention it to Stuart, who will certainly, now his mind is so engrossed, not enquire, but take for granted that you are well provided; 'tis a mere formal business matter. Will you read this?"

I read:

"DEAR PATERSON,

"Pay to the order of Lady Clifford, widow of Sir Burleigh Clifford, any sum or sums she may require at any time, to the limit of my credit with you, debiting same in your ledger account against the personalty of the late Sir B. C., now in the hands, as sole trustee, of Alexander M'Causland, of 'Rievaul,' Versailles, France, applying for it only in the event of my death, for the administration of my estate.

"By doing this you will oblige,

"Your obedient servant,

"KILMARNOCK.

"Muirhaig, Oct., 1745."

"Enclose a line with your signature, for verification, and that will end this formality. Write:

"DEAR SIR,

"As sole administratrix, I authorize you to debit against the personalty, left to me under the will of late Sir Burleigh Clifford, Baronet,

late of Burleigh Manor, any sums borrowed through your bank from William, Earl of Kilmarnock, whose order to that effect comes with this.

"Your obedient servant,

"HELEN CLIFFORD.

"Muirhaig, Oct., 1745."

"That will do," said he, folding, sealing and directing them. "Paterson is a very good old fellow, he would do anything for me. When you want money you have but to write a line to the Grassmarket Banking House of Paterson and Craig. Nell, I shall be a very Shylock. I will despatch this by sure hands to Paterson. Nor do you hesitate about using it. I have a few thousands there, a special private account of my own, apart from the general income of my estates, which are encumbered, and have many charges on them, rendering available cash pretty scarce. I wonder is Home not come? Oh! my dear, my dear, to give you away, though for your own happiness, is too cruel! Why did we ever meet! Nell, do not laugh again at that hope of mine of a hereafter we shall share. 'Tis all I have of consolation, and we Scots are superstitious—if a profound conviction of a truth we cannot prove be so. Say farewell to me now, I hear the executioner."

A strong shudder passed over him from head to foot, as the sound of a stranger's voice came in from the hall. With a long and lingering embrace he took my hand and led me into the parlour, where Stuart stood awaiting us.

To Mr. Home the scene in the oak-panelled parlour doubtless appeared commonplace enough —a quiet, unimpressive trio. A tall, sunburnt soldier — the dark hue strangely disguising Stuart's face—a pale, statue-like woman, a handsome man, near mid-age.

In this time of war, and rumours of war, were many such hasty weddings; nor was there in the name, Charles Casimir, any peculiarity to excite comment:

"CHARLES CASIMIR, "*Bachelor*,

"HELEN CLIFFORD, "*Widow*,

"I pronounce you man and wife!"

A little exhortation as to mutual duties, a little Scriptural exposition on the submission of wives, the forbearance of husbands, which we listened to with inward weariness, and felt to be impertinent and uncalled for to gentlefolk, which he knew at any rate we were, and Home withdrew, in some apparent embarrassment at our chilling silence. Kilmarnock lingered awhile and then went from the room, now

chilling cold, with the peculiar searching cold of midnight. Two smoky candles flared in the draught from the open door. I shivered, weak and languid, almost indifferent, my strongest feeling grief and pity for Sergius.

All Stuart's eagerness had died down, he looked haggard and troubled. As the minutes passed he said wearicdly—

"You will now be satisfied. My whole ruin is accomplished if this become known or credited, and Sergius will not be slow to publish it; 'tis nothing to him if a thousand kingdoms were lost, so you are content—safe."

I made no reply. All Sergius' tenderness, care for me, rushed to my mind, and contrasting with them a vision of years to be spent with Stuart—years embittered by reproaches, darkened by disdain. Unable to endure it, I hid my face in my hands with a stifling sigh, too weak for tears or anger.

"To think," said he, "that I did this mad and suicidal act at Kilmarnock's order. Sure you could have trusted my word? To declare you my wife before a witness was law enough for all Scotland; yet now, when all depends on me, is the moment you choose to make me proclaim my lunacy—my dependence on an imperious woman's will."

Choked with shame and anguish at this upbraiding, I sank into a seat.

"Leave me," said I, "for God's sake! Through you—you—I am now alone on earth—have no friend."

"You are thinking of Kilmarnock," said he, stopping in his swift angry walk up and down. "He has aided, abetted, and counselled you in all your torture of me. That is over. You have now to deal with one who, if you look to the right or to the left without allowance, will know why 'tis done. Helen"—his mood changed, swift as a spirit's—"you cannot tell what is on my mind. This war, this constant pressure of anxiety, terrors of doubt—are making me a demon. Forgive me! To-morrow night I start with Sergius for the army, which will march on Chester. I am supposed to have stayed behind to give audience to an emissary from France. An emissary from Heaven! Oh, my dear, when I utter wild or angry words to you, 'tis like a two-edged sword, my own heart is hurt by them."

I listened with dread, yet with some disdain, to this easy penitence for a cruel reproach, and leaving him to seek what repose he could on the couch in the sitting-room, went silent and weary to my chamber, dreaming away the rest

of the dark hours before dawn, as only the sorrowful dream—in visions of ideal happiness, of love that was true and tender, of friendship that was faithful, and strong, and kind. That was no dream, for Sergius' voice, as he spoke to Home in the corridor, woke me late next day.

Whether Home had been informed, guessed or suspected anything of Stuart's rank I cannot say. Certain it is that on our meeting his bow had in it an indescribable reverence and respect. To myself, who had grown so accustomed to think of Casimir as himself only, apart from power or title, I felt a little amaze at this humbleness in the divine; and passing on, after a brief greeting, joined Sergius in the breakfast-room, very little happier for this new settlement of affairs, holding it to be—save for the quieting of Kilmarnock's scruples—but a shadowy bond, a binding of this new Samson with withes. Thinking this, Samson himself entered, with a moody and discontented brow, and saluting us proceeded gravely with breakfast, almost in silence.

"Our wedding breakfast," said he presently, more cheerfully, when, Sergius gone, he came and stood beside my chair. "But, my dear, we have been married so long—all our lives, it seems to me, since

the past without you represents a blank—I almost forget, so unreal is life without love."

"'Twas Sergius insisted on it," I murmured, a blush stealing to my face at thought of any insistance of what seemed a kind of compulsion—shivering anew as the reproach of last night that, this known, might be his ruin, the ruin of the cause.

"Yes," said he, "Sergius is the serpent to our Eden. Before, we scarce knew what magic was in a little snuffy Scotch divine; we imagined our own words as like to be trusted by each other as his screed of exhortations. What was that he said about mutual duties?"

"I don't know," said I, getting half angry at this teasing *resumé* of a distasteful subject. "Always remember, sir, 'twas not my wish."

"This is magnificent," said he, laughing, though tears rained from my eyes for very shame at the humiliating thought that I had consented, and that for this I had been reproached.

"All my life since I met you has been a tangle, a wilderness, haunted by pain, fear, reproach, dread, and disquiet. Nor will this contemptuous treatment of yours lighten the dreary way for me."

"My God!" said he, violently angry. "Mine seems like to be a *viâ dolorosa*. Was you not,

madam, but now, quite composed and happy with Sergius, and the very minute he goes is the signal for a storm, despair, reproaches. Are we strangers, or our love a new thing, that I must use the ceremony and observance of our first meeting? It should be enough that I love you ten thousand times better now than then—that I know you have both heart and mind. Must I assure you only too truly that I would rather lose the kingdom than you—that you have all my heart, let my fancy range as it may? Nell, remember my brief stay here ; do not make me miserable. Come, let us go, walk awhile in the sunshine. 'Twas an old theory of yours, and is mine too, that angels themselves would quarrel were they shut in by walls."

Wrapping his plaid round both, we wandered out into the glorious grey and gold calm of the autumn day, and grew happy and reconciled.

On re-entering, Sergius, who had been out with Home, came to bid us adieu, and receive his latest instructions from Stuart, who, withdrawing to write to Lord George Murray, left us alone. Grey-lined, haggard, and anxious, he stood by the hearth, regarding me in silence.

"You look ill," said I, presently. "Oh, my dear friend, what can I say in parting that will thank you for all your goodness to me? What better

than that, 'Sick, and in prison ye visited me.' That is true, and sums up all the great debt I owe you—a debt never to be repaid save by gratitude and love."

"Nell," said he, drawing me within the circle of his arms, "gratitude has no place with us. To serve you is my life, to go from you next to the bitter of death. Oh, my sweet darling, God grant your future may be a happy one! 'Twill at least have fewer thorns, now that proud lover of yours has been forced to own at what a price he values you. Do not believe this ceremony useless; legal it may not be, but it obliges him as a man of honour to a care for you, a constant tenderness, a never-failing guardianship, that without it would never have been conceded. It is coat armour, where before was but a cobweb—and a weak nature worships strength. You will find the ease of it in a thousand ways—ten thousand thoughts centre on a wife, where elsewhere would be but ten. Nor, dear, need you grieve at the haste. He has no time to spend Corydon fashion. Oh, Nell, I have been a brother to you—I have cut my throat, I have torn out my heart and cast it at his feet, for your sake! You say 'Sick and in prison ye visited me.' Who will cure this bitter heartache, visit

me in this prison in which my life must end?"

Long after these words recurred to me—then, only tears fell silently on his hands, which I held clapsed in mine.

"Do not forget me!" I prayed of him with trembling lips. "To you I can never change, let you become harsh, alienated, or even an enemy, as you may."

"That is so likely," said he, kissing my hands. "If I ever have been harsh, forgive me! I do not doubt I have—who can be tender enough to so sweet a rose? Ah, my dear, this parting is terrible to me. 'This way fall I to death' seems its only type, for life without you is to me but living death. Think how long I have loved you—and now—now this to be its end! True 'twas my own planning for your peace—for your honour. Could I scatter under foot the petals of the rose I loved?"

"Mr. Casimir bade me tell ye to cam till him." Home entered, and, as Sergius withdrew, looked upon me with gloomy disapproval.

"Madam," said he, presently, after ruminating a while, "we are bid be instant in season and out of season with words to further the cause."

"I believe they are marching on England, sir, skirting the crown of the Cheviots."

"That they canna," said he, eagerly, "sae mony a brak as the Cheviot's croon has; but I meant aye a word of Scripture. However, ye are but a lass, an' Kilmarnock's kenned for a discreet mon. 'Twas but a kiss o' peace—o' friendship, I doubtna'. Na', as I say, the Cheevyots canna be sae used as a cover for a mairch—that is, with ordinar care against it o' the enemy, an' ordinar watch. Is your gude-mon a soldier?"

"Yes," said I. "Here, sir, is a *Gazette*. Me, I must beg you to excuse leaving you."

He bowed, and retreating to a window, more than satisfied, doubtless began to convince an imagined adversary that he was a skilled strategist as well as a sound divine. I went to my room, searching amongst my possessions for some token for Sergius. 'Twas a country-bred custom —that of keepsakes. My heart ached, as I thought it but a symbol of parting. Yet, as I tossed jewels and ribbons a-heap on the table, I thought with a kind of despair of the possibility that there was nothing he could value, nothing appropriate. At last I found a ring—'twas of plain and solid gold. With a needle I traced "Helen" on it, in even, legible letters, gave it a long lingering kiss, and, half heartbroken at thought that it might be we should meet no

more on earth, kissed it yet again and again, till, hearing his voice in the hall, I ran down with it on my hand. Stuart was in the parlour speaking to Home about his journey to Edinburgh, Home having a light car he was willing to lend, and be obliged to Stuart for his riding-horse. I drew Sergius aside.

"Here," said I, "we are great traffickers in rings, milord. See, my name is on this. No, 'tis near invisible, but 'tis there. Will you have it on your hand? Do not laugh at me for a country poor wretch—be content for once to be Colin Clout, as I Dolly Dairymaid. Oh, take this, the letters of my name, to be with you! Oh, do take it, you will not refuse!"

"Refuse!" said he, with fine scorn at the thought, "that is likely. Nell, add to it—give me the ribbon from your hair. See, I tie it, so, through this sweet keepsake—place it round my neck, so. Oh, my darling, you are now without as within my heart, in letters of gold! This will a little dull the pain of parting—since I shall feel it ever resting on my breast, a silent message from you."

"Take with it then my gratitude for ten thousand kindnesses."

"Hush!" said he. "With your poor ten thousand, a million joys die out of life for me

away from you. You will let me write. Oh, my darling, I must—or go mad! You can burn the letters. They shall be only such as a friend —a brother—might pen. If I may not write, take back your ring—to me it will be but a symbol of death. So parted, in silence that may not be broken, 'twere death to me."

"Write, then." I dared not say how gladly I gave leave. Silence was to me no more beautiful than to him. So we parted, Home riding off with him. He looked back once, and waved his hand. Alas!

"There," said Stuart—joining me in the portico, low browed, and with its solid greystone pillars—"there rides off the lover, the protector, the friend, the brother, the saint, the *bon mari*."

"No," said I. "Here is the *bon mari*, the lover, the friend, who himself should have rode off, ere he descended to insult."

"Is truth, then, an insult?"

"Truth," said I, "is an atmosphere, no mere isolated breath—it is our life. It is true I love Sergius, have friendship, fraternity, regard of the highest sincerity for him. These are to me as a sweet west wind to a summer day. Your love is the day itself—sultry, cloudy, stormy, infinitely various in ingrateful moods, but yet

the day, which one must endure—which is our life."

"Can you not, madam, find another word than endure—a better?"

"Endurance," said I bitterly, "in the past as in the future. Have you ever been good to me as Milord Kilmarnock?—ay, thousands of times. Do you think I could have toiled on my steep and stony path unaided? It is well for the robber to taunt the Samaritan. I will not hear it. Now he has gone—is in danger—I will not hear a word against him. Think what you will, be who you may, he is every way higher, better than you."

"This is indeed to be sincere!"

"With you I was never otherwise, that you know. I desire that you forget this foolish *coup de théatre*, this marriage, in which you believe no more than that it has satisfied me."

"And you?"

"Sergius is satisfied."

"My God! Is it thus we begin the life I have prayed for, hoped for?"

"Did you not yourself say so last night? 'I am driven to this to content Sergius. He is away, content; what need of further hypocrisies?'"

"Nell, if I said so, forgive me! It must nee d

be bitter to me to be doubted by Kilmarnock, to yield to his assumption of authority. He is obstinacy's self, and, had I not agreed to his dictation, would have used the strange influence he has with you against me. Have we not suffered enough in the past from self-wove toils? 'Twas that decided me. How could I tell what obstacle he might raise to divide us? Dear, believe me, 'twas but a passing discontent with Sergius' masterfulness, such as in my place you yourself had resented. Sweet, we have a week before us; 'tis not till the first week of November we cross the Border, and till then Kilmarnock will keep things straight and account for my non-arrival. He is, when all is said, a magnificent diplomatist. How could I afford to quarrel with him? This week, which, unaccounted for to my generals, had been signal for discontents, desertions, he will make strengthen the cause. I wish he would be my friend still, as of old. That may come, if I fulfil the conditions—make you happy."

To much of this I did not listen, it recurred to me after; but, hearing that he paused for a reply, asked could he not content himself with Muirhaig for a week.

"No," said he, "I will not leave you here. In Edinburgh will be happier memories—

brighter rooms, gayer sights. When your woman has packed, Home's country car will be at the door, and we shall drive to Auld Reekie like a young farmer and his wife."

So arranged, so it fell out; and on reaching Edinburgh, we went to a large, well-furnished flat, of many rooms, near to the Greyfriars Church.

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'Twas in the mansion of a French widow lady, whose husband had aided in the '15, and being unrewarded by James had turned from his allegiance to the Jacobites. Not so his dame. To her "bonnie Prince Charlie" was an idol still, and being now very old and very poor, but still too proud to give up some state and style, the sharing her house with a Scotch laird and his wife, who were Jacobites, was easily arranged.

She would totter in sometimes to see, so far as her purblind gaze could, the happy young folk who were still full of hope, joy, contentment—would rustle her stiff brocade in an elaborate courtesy, murmur a few phrases in French, so mumbled by toothlessness as to be nigh inarticulate, then withdraw satisfied to her own remote apartment. We were very happy. It rained and was dismal outside—within was warmth, peace, love, a rest from all retrospection, forecasting.

"Hidden away here," said he, "like the Prince and the sleeping beauty, there could not be a more fairy-like *chatelaine* than Madame Chateaumesnils."

Often at night we wandered to Arthur's Seat, but by day were content to be alone in the silent house.

"No indolence like a Highlander's," he would say, "let campaigning come later as it will. This is a point of delicious rest—for once we are at peace, even with each other. I like to watch you gliding about, in that slow, graceful way you have. A flying, fluttering woman is terrible to me—'tis like a hen rustling its feathers. You dress, too, to perfection, so exquisitely—a rose with its graceful symmetrical completeness, its elegance."

Lying lazily on a divan drawn near the fire, thus he sang my praises, a mere excuse for utter idleness. I was packing a number of lambswool socks into a small valise, determined that in all the host of marching Highlanders on the 8th, should be one who was not sorefooted, then or later. 'Twas all I could do. 'Twas now the 6th, the morning had been golden as spring, with the added charm of its veiling and distant mists. I had been out awhile on business, to the Grass-

market, and been welcomed on my return with a lover's rapture, of which this was the subsiding cadence. Scarce had silence fallen on the last words when the old French *bonne* entered, assuring us volubly that *Madame sa maitresse* was *au lit*, that she herself had been cleaning the outer stairs, when a young lady insisted on entering to see me.

"Will take no denial," said the crone, in a voice of feeble protest, "and is here."

"By Heavens!" said Stuart, "she has made some mistake. I will go into the next room."

"No need, I will receive her in the anteroom." But in the anteroom was a voice heralding its owner's approach, at sound of which Stuart made haste to retire. It was Margaret Cameron.

"Dear Lady Clifford," said she, "you are well guarded, at once by the stupidity and Frenchness of your servants. I am so glad to have found you. I saw you coming from Paterson's Bank in the Grassmarket. I was not quite sure, so I ran in and asked old Paterson was it not you. He hesitated—there is a conspiracy of silence about you—I have broke it. My dear, are you glad to see me?"

"Very," said I, smiling at the eager cordiality of my late rival.

"I followed you," said she frankly. "Such a dismal house for you to be mewed up in. Will you not come and stay with us? Oh! I forgot, you are a widow. Well, but he was old—I like young callants. I used to think the Prince old and—ugly, save the mark! I dare not for my life say so to the clan at home—I should have dirks in my heart, or at the least bannock and broth for a mouth. He has gone south. So much the better. I met, ah, Lady Clifford! a French officer, about twenty or twenty-one, with eyes like soft darkness, and such a skin—smooth, soft, dark olive. It would be what you would like, since you do not like freckles—see, I have mine still—and he admires red hair, says mine is a nimbus, like a saint's."

"So it is," said I laughing, "'tis red gold, and lovely."

"You can afford to praise," said she, giving me a hearty kiss in her exuberance of contentment. "Come to us sometimes. We have many French and Italian visitors—stormy petrels who are waiting to see how the storm goes. I don't care myself for so much prudence. If they want to help the Prince they should go, march to him sword in hand; but *they* say they help more staying in Edinburgh, and really we women would be lost without them.

There is great enquiry about you, too; so much wonderment how so lovely a lady can so contrive to seclude herself. Boyd says—you know Boyd—that 'tis his father's fault; that he was left guardian, nor will not allow you even to peep at the world till you have mourned a whole year; and then people smile, for Boyd's father is not so very, very old, and is not like the Prince—he is far handsomer and gentler—yes, decidedly. I should like him better, only I don't like such old people as either."

"When will you stop," said I uneasily, "and tell me of yourself only?"

"What is there to tell?" said she carelessly, "except one talks too of the men who admire one. Will you come to our house? It is full of nice men, all wild about you. Most of them saw you at the Review. All of them are in love, or would be—mother thinks even Berthold. but you would not let him, would you?—my Berthold!—you are too kind, dear. It is good of you to live shut up here. I will come again and bring Berthold and his friend, who is a marquis. Good-bye, now."

"Stay," said I, "for a dish of tea." She stayed, and over it I contrived to intimate that, while glad to see her, I could at present see or receive no others, begging her to respect my

privacy, to which she agreed, promising herself to come as often as she could.

I escorted her to the foot of the stairs, and there saw one I presumed was Berthold—a handsome, dark Provençal, with melting black eyes, and a fine mouth. Also Madame Pearlie's personal attendant, an aged Scotchwoman, who had probably been her nurse, and had certainly never crossed her.

On returning, Stuart had resumed his lounge, and, with his eyes closed, appeared to be dozing.

"Get up," said I, "you Prince *maladroit et laide*, and listen to the Beauty's disclosures. In the first place, her newe, newe love——"

"Me being the old?"

"I suppose so—yes—is handsome, truly. I have just seen him; eyes like night, soft olive skin, and so sweet a mouth—sensitive and curved."

"Helen, this displeases me—I do not like it. 'Tis well enough for a mere miss, like the Cameron!"

"Sir, 'tis she I am quoting. His friend, a marquis, is, 'twould seem, sighing for me, and proposes, or she does, all to come and call. Come, you heard all the chatter, dear. I will not repeat it; but she is a kind, good girl, and I may, after all, go to their house."

"You may not," said he, angrily. "Ay, now I see Kilmarnock was in the right—'tis authority alone restrains you. Thank God, 'tis mine! I forbid your going—I forbid your receiving Margaret Cameron here, with her talk of lovers. You were best order Madame de Grantsmenil to deny you to everybody."

"That would be absurd," said I. "Do you expect me to live in utter solitude—a solitude of one?"

"Yes, I both expect and require it. To you there is no hardship in living alone. You shall have books—for society, there is Madame. You are not to go out, either. You are not strong enough to be abroad in these autumn days. Surely, what hundreds of French ladies submit to in convent life, in far closer quarters than this, might content you awhile till I return?"

"For months," I murmured—the gay glimpse of the outer world brought by Miss Cameron convincing me how unreal are the charms of continued solitude.

Fired with a new jealousy, a new fear, he left nothing unsaid that could bend me to agree to the solitude of this life. At first, conscious of its injustice, I resisted, pleading that health itself would give way, immured thus—life become chill and dull. Then, to his

passionate pleadings of his fears, anxieties, for me, I consented, solemnly promising never, save at dusk, to leave the house, and then only for an hour's exercise; never to admit a visitor, even Miss Cameron, and content myself with his letters—with writing to him and knitting for him. With that, there was peace again; and next day, on going out, I found installed a black-browed Breton portress, who courtesied humbly enough, yet had bolts to draw ere I went, and murmured that 'twas by Madame's order, she was so old—so old, and fearful of strangers, and the house so unguarded.

"I ordered it," he admitted. "Of what good the feeble, useless, old *femme de place*, in whom Madame trusts?—even for common safety, it is fitting some stronger arms should be about. This Breton I heard of by chance, and had well recommended by a trusty French friend. I shall have her husband, too, for the outer stairs—there is a room half-way up. So, my dear, you need not fear, even if there be disturbances in the city, as there may chance to be."

This I believe he but affected to apprehend.

"It may be as you will about the portress," said I, "but for porter I will not have a foreigner. He must be Scotch. I could not feel

safe with a French cut-throat near, for aught one knew a galley-slave. Find some honest Scot, and I will feel secure. Not a Frenchman, after Dupont."

To this he agreed. There was nothing now he did not hasten to concede, one haunting fear holding him of my going abroad into a society whose irreverent young damsels called him "old" at seven-and-twenty, and voted French Counts, Italian Marquises—who aided the cause by looking on from Edinburgh—Adonii.

"Certainly," said I, teasing him, "you are pale, colourless; you have dull eyes, a pointed chin; was you not a Stuart you would be ugly —as Margaret Cameron now considers you. So do I."

This, though he smiled, troubling him, had to be soothed away with sweetest flattery.

In the quiet old house love and content reigned now, yet looking forward I shivered. What would it be when he had gone? Alone in the large, shadowy rooms, egress jealously restricted, silence almost as of a tomb!

"What will it be for me?" said he, with a sigh, seeing me brooding over the melancholy of the silent house, where memories of Sir Burleigh would surely come reproaching me.

"Let me return to Muirhaig," I implored,

"this strange place will be terrible to me alone. Think, at night, with the wind sighing through its emptiness, and Madame, spectre-like, looking in on me! Dear, you do not mean it—'twill be cruel. Remember the severe shock I have experienced in losing Sir Burleigh! He would not have doomed me thus. I am afraid of the dark. Find me a companion—at least let Pearlie Cameron come. What does her prattle of lovers matter to me?"

"To me it matters.'

A harsh refusal at last to all prayers and tears. Ill and miserable I spent the last day in dread of the coming night—fear as real as is that of a child left alone in a dark room. Yet he would not relent, deeming it but an excited fancy, that once alone my old mastery of mind would reassert its sway.

"I cannot," said he gloomily, as his last answer "I do not doubt you. Yet to know you seen, admired, eyes resting on you—thoughts busy as spectres, cruel as fiends, would come to me, torturing every moment of absence. You will be all safe here now. My dear, 'tis best for both. I shall return to you very soon." With that as farewell, he went.

* * * *

From a life of colour, of incident, of varied

passions, I was plunged into a cold and stirless solitude; a silence so complete that, as the days passed, I would speak aloud to myself, and shudder at the weird sound in the large sitting-room. I knitted and knitted like the Parcæ; ate the gloomy, solitary meals, often scanty and insufficient, which the old *bonne* placed ceremoniously in the large, cold dining-room; then returned as a prisoner to a cell, to the only companion I had, the fire.

To myself it seemed that, being foredoomed by fate to an inexpiable sin, I was to strive ever for its expiation in vain, Sisyphus-like—that my sufferings might not remit it, yet the sufferance must continue. Lassitude seized and held me a prey to drear memories, to dark forebodings. I ceased at length to desire the dismalness relieved; the voice of the old Frenchwoman, muttering to herself over the arrangements of the table, affected me with a startled sense of strangeness. At length the increasing cold of winter apparently confined the *chatelaine* to her room—for I never now saw her, and try in vain to record how the days passed, for I knew not myself. By degrees I ceased to avail myself of the bat-like flight into the dusk of the wintry city, which I had so solemnly promised should be my only absences from home.

Sergius did not write. I felt this dully as an added fault of my own. He could not—he must hate me, on reflection, regard me with aversion. Once Stuart wrote. I put his letter into the fire unread, lest the torpor of this sufferance should by it be changed to some acute agony. Ever knitting—knitting, no news came to me from the outer world. The pine needles would be lying thickly on the snow of Sir Burleigh's grave. I rejoiced that he could not know my loneliness, could not feel for my blank and hopeless life. With sighs which the silence stifled, I wished myself beside him, under the the drifting snow, with the pine needles lightly falling, as memories fall on the dead. Once, hearing the *bonne* mutter that her mistress was ill, very ill—as to account to herself for the misplacing of spoons, of forks, on the table she was preparing—I followed her from the room, and unheard—for her way lay downward. I took mine upward, a momentary compassion piercing through my lifelessness—perhaps a striving against it of that spirit which is part of youth, of which Ovid tells us—

"That e'en for change of scene would seek the shades below."

Me! I sought the shades above. Snow was falling outside, all noise from the city was hushed. I entered, unannounced, the chamber of this

other solitary spectre—a spectre of age, as I of youth.

In an acre of bed—a bed larger than any of the largest state beds at the Manor—lay a shrivelled atom of humanity, with bare wrinkled throat, wrinkled hands, and dull, far-retreating eyes. Her dulled senses seemed not to perceive me, her deafened ears had not heard my tread. I was, to her, but an apparition; her memory of the strangers beneath her roof had faded in these weeks of absence. She held a rosary loosely, and clutched at the blankets. I did not know what to say—words were as wanting to me as to herself. To me she was but an apparition of age—wanting nothing, hoping nothing. She made no sign. I turned and retraced my steps. Half-way down the wide stairs I met a priest, a confessor, gliding up. He looked at me in surprise, I at him. 'Twas Dupont!

I entered my own apartment with a dull and crushing sense of fear—even a prisoner, on seeing a snake suddenly added to the gloom of a dungeon, may fear. So I felt at sight of this man who had wronged me, and whom I had wronged.

"The soup is cold," muttered the crone, "and you, Madame, you have wandered out of your bounds; pardon, 'tis Madame's house,

my mistress, and she ill—ill, and to be protected."

I made no reply, thinking, as I supped the meagre soup, of a Latin adage Sandy M'Causland used when dissatisfied with any dish—"*Parva fames consto, magna fastidium.*" I had hungered for revenge on Dupont—what, after loathing of my own folly, was its easy cost to entail?

Speculation aroused hunger. I cleared the scanty dishes, even to the cheese, and was looking at the poured-out glass of claret, apportioned me as to a *demoiselle à pension*, when Manon, the maid, entered, preceding, without any ceremony, l'Abbé Dupont.

Possibly to him, fresh from the wintry world without, the cheerless and ghostly presence in the chamber above, I may have appeared to be a careless daughter, sitting at ease.

Manon departing, he bowed.

"So," said I, "you have returned?"

"From the Highlands, Madame, yes."

"There is little use in this interview, sir. You had your views of my conduct, and expressed them—I mine of your judgment, and avenged it. Until chance or change give further power to either, so it must rest."

"Power?" said Dupont. "By that you infer

power to harm you, Lady Clifford. No; that I hold now, but, save to men, vengeance has in my mind no place. Why should I ever feel it for you? The vengeance you took was but bare justice, for what I now own to be a crime against you."

"That admission," said I, "is well. Go, sir, with that—to me your punishment will always seem incomplete."

"A dirk in my heart, instance, Madame. But, Madame, that is of the Medician era, and you have good sense—you—and sound judgment. Ay, and courage," he went on, with a slow, cruel smile, like that of an inquisitor. "You do not blench, though you are alone here, and I might leave you with a dirk in your heart—that heart you have so ably divided, giving a whole to the one who is dead, a half each to two others, who, having named before, I should but offend anew in naming. I have not come hither to insult you," he went on rapidly, in English; "I am a gentleman, and love no *bourgeois* measures. I come to ask, will you give ransom for the life of Kilmarnock? You are wealthy, but that is not it. Nor could all your wealth save it." He paused.

"What is it?" said I, in surprise; then contemptuously, "Kilmarnock's life is dear to me,

but that you allege it in danger gives no title to belief. Sir, there is Lady Kilmarnock, to whom in the first place, this offer should be made."

"Doubtless, Madame, were we here publicly consulting the opinion of the world on a point of ethics. But there is a world—invisible to the plain, the discreet, the many—a world where power alone has value, as you remarked. I have Kilmarnock's life in my power. Do you choose a ransom?"

"No," said I, doubting, disbelieving, loathing him; murmuring, as I thought of Sergius with this ignoble enemy—"*At ille excussa bestia in ignem nihil mali passus est.*"

Dupont bowed.

"You have a fine faith, Madame; doubtless your Saint Paul might, in return, acknowledge to having received 'no small kindness.'"

"That," said I, "is speculative, and so, properly, theological, as was your former theory. I will, sir, with your leave, close this interview, which you need not attempt to repeat."

With a fine, courtier-like bow Dupont retired.

I closed and locked the door, in a vague alarm; till, hours after, hearing the *bonne* feebly beating against it, to bring in a supper tray, reflected that, against a man like Dupont, bolts and bars were useless; that he was not of those who kill

the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

"Sergius," I thought, in an utter weariness, "will learn that he is at large again. Nor is he likely to be taken at a disadvantage." Yet, a little roused for him from apathy, I wrote a note in cypher, a cypher he himself had taught me—and addressing it, wrapped myself from the cold, and, to the amaze of the black-browed portress, passed out into the snow of the winter evening, and hurrying along—attended by the porter, whose orders, he told me, were to that effect,—went to the Grassmarket to Paterson's Bank.

It was not yet closed. A few late country customers, whose horses were in waiting outside, were changing bank-bills for gold. It was lit with dim oil-lamps. I waited for Mr. Paterson himself to be disengaged, and on his being so approached him. He saluted me with some austerity, and on my asking him to forward the letter, as I knew he had constant communication with the army, consented, though coldly.

"You are a fool!" thought I contemptuously, seeing him, as I passed out, deliberately break the seal to possess himself of its contents, "and may go sit in your conventicle on a stool of repentance, for thinking me 'even such a one as thyself.' 'Sir, there's witchcraft in it.' The

worthy old banker will at any rate conclude so."

With swift steps, sending snowflakes to the right and left, I sped on through the nigh-deserted streets.

A few soldiers were about, who had been disabled from active service, at Prestonpans. One of these was talking to a woman, who, on seeing me, hurriedly left him, gliding into some wynd or portico of a house. I seemed vaguely to connect her with Ailsie Fraser, though I had not seen her face. I was right. She presently confronted me at the door of my residence.

"Gang awa', ye daft cuthy!" My attendant came forward.

"Sir," said I, "you are too forward—this is a friend of mine." He muttered an apology, and withdrew.

"Is't here ye live?" said Ailsie eagerly. "Oh, my leddy! can ye tell me aught of him—of Will?"

"He has gone south, Ailsie."

"That I know; but oh, mem! hae ye not chanced to hear o's welfare? Dinna grudge me a crumb o' news, though I am but as a pariah dog to ye. Mem, ye are heavenly kind, an' gudeness lives; doubtna Ailsie will do ye a gude turn ae day or ither—if she may."

"He is well," say I, with a sob—hoping it. "Yet, Ailsie, I would tell ye, could ye help it—he is threated."

"Tell me"—Ailsie's eyes glistened from her thin yet lovely face—"wha 'tis threats Will."

"'Tis a priest," said I, "who comes here; his name, Dupont. Aye keep this to yourself, lass."

"Aye, aye," she nodded her head, her small, even teeth locking together for a moment, "doubtna I will watch him, though he were Pape o' Rome."

I offered her money, which she took absently, and, wishing her good-night, went in, the porter going up the outer stair to his room.

Thus this incident of Dupont was as the end of a rope thrown by fate, grasping which I was slowly drawn day by day from the sea of lethargy, of isolation, into which I had sunk—drawn once more amongst the living, from the dead.

"I am flattered, madame," wrote Dupont, next day, for himself I saw no more, "to be the subject of a conversation between two dames, each so eminent in her several sphere for beauty, and that fatal fascination before which beauty pales. I allude to yourself and your proclaimed 'friend,' Ailsie Fraser; a city outcast, yet a sister! Can you not see it yourself—that, despite differences, you are mirrored in her, she in you ——"

"No, I cannot." I thrust the rest of the vile letter on the fire. "Were it so, I should both feel and acknowledge it. But, sir, you are deceived by a casual and surface colouring—an almost equality in good drawing. Doubtless, Ailsie, could one know, had a scoundrel father too, equal with Philip Rohan—perchance a *bon camarade*—as this Sir Priest supposes we two forlorn women to be."

I smiled over this spite, and fed the fire with dozens of unopened letters from the same hand, as day by day they came, ceasing at length to receive them.

Dupont ceased to come. Ailsie told me, in an ill-scrawled note, he had "ganged awa to France" —doubtless with a still worse report—opinion of me. What of that? Evil report or good report mattered nothing to me. Nor, would folk but crush the noxious worm—calumny—under their feet, should so much harm be wrought by it. Instead they stoop, listen to its hissing murmur, and lift it from its proper obscurity in the mud that it may sting them at its ease. Who better escape its virulence than those who, walking loftily on, ignore it?

* * * * * *

The army had reached Manchester, met with many recruits, and was in high spirits.

Reached Derby—nothing now but the Finchley Camp between them and London.

A retreat advised! Oh, fatal and ill-omened counsellor! Murray, could you counsel the Lion of the North to retreat before a Hog from Hanover?

Northwards they came—hasty marches, dispirited men, a pursuing enemy—still north. Rumours flew about Edinburgh, shrill cries from the "Courant" were shouted. From east and west, from north and south, Ailsie collected rumours, and with her fine, though erratic intelligence, seldom failed by collating them to arrive at a just result. Other means of learning I had none.

Forbidden to go out, to receive anyone, like a philosopher of old I would go to the portico, and there, through the grille of the closed door, hear Ailsie, caring nothing for the Breton portress or her approval—a law to myself.

"They march on Stirling—almost certain victory for us."

That night I lit twelve candles, all I had, and the *bonne*, numbering them, declared them *l'Apotres*, and crossed herself to every one.

Next night, oh joy! Kilmarnock came. He brought a hundred messages from Stuart, who

desired me to come to him, if but for an hour, under Sergius' guard.

"You can meet near Stirling," said he, "for after we march on Inverness."

"I would go," said I doubtfully, "but have not strength nor courage. For months I have been absolutely alone, save for the threatening visit of Dupont, and latterly, rumours picked up here and there by Ailsie Fraser, who brought them to the grille, or I had known nothing."

"Were you prevented from going out?"

"I was forbidden. The Camerons asked me, Casimir forbad; and I have led a sad, miserable life here, in uncertainty, doubt, dread. Why not have written, as you promised?"

"Good God!" said he, "I did write—often. Never mind, do not weep; 'tis but fortune of war."

"Did Dupont's threat alarm you?" I asked.

"The villain!" said he, "a dirk shall quiet him next time we meet—once for all. Alarm me? No. Nell, we have had some sad sights—men dying of wounds in the frost and snow. The death is no matter, the suffering before it is horrible. I often thought of Sir Burleigh and his comparatively painless death, when I heard these poor creatures screaming in agony for

their wives, their children ; for but one word, one kiss."

"You are frightfully thin," said I sadly, clasping closely his death-dealing hands. "Why does a God who is merciful permit such horrors as mutual slaughter amongst his creatures? It may he asserted, philosophically, set at rest rivalries other than those of rulers ; calm for ever hearts that now ache, that on this earth will never be happy. Winter is harsh, spring is not so far behind it. Death is bitter—what will reunion be?"

"I will come with you," I murmured, mine eyes drooping under his fixed and tender gaze.

"I thought," said he, "I had been stronger. Nell, I cannot escort you. In trying to secure your happiness I have but gained you a tyrant, spent my strength in vain. You cannot guess the bitterness to me of it all. You were free ; why should he win you, whose love is so faint, so vacillating, whose care is evinced in condemning you to a life of gloom, of solitude, of danger —you, the brightest crown jewel of his life?"

"Milord," said I, "you must now use the language of ceremony, as must I. Helen and Sergius will easily be replaced by——"

He laughed.

"When that comes to pass, life will indeed

be easy; when I can address you indifferently, cease to feel the sweet influence of your presence, take your hand without trembling at its soft touch; when you are banished from my dreams, away from my waking thoughts. My dear, 'tis not the words that will be hard, 'tis but matter of habit; the sweet name will nestle in my heart, content."

This was terrible! I felt I ought to reprehend it, to at once stop the outward expression of his despairing passion, against which he honestly believed himself to be striving, yet fanned thus.

So, smiling, I commended him as ambassador for an absent lover, and asked him would he take instead of me a letter to Stirling, on better terms than those in the old French "*Contes des Fées*," which were referred to thus:—

"*Il se trouvoit quelque femmes que le chargeoient de lettres pour leurs maris, mais elles le payoient si mal, et cela alloit à si peu de chose qu'il ne daignoit mettre en linge de coute ce qu'il gagnoit de ce côté-la.*"

At this he laughed. "That," said he, "was a mercenary messenger." Then, with a restless sigh, "Nell, do not make a jest of it, I am truly miserable. Had I perished at Stirling it might have been best for both, I cannot cease

to love you. Any day may see my death; must I cry out in vain for a word, a tone, one look of answering love—I, who love you more than life?"

I closed mine eyes. The room was in dusky shadows, fitfully wavering in the red firelight; yet I felt that I dared not look at Kilmarnock.

"Worse, wickeder, you cannot be," urged some whispering fiend. "You allow this love; why will you see him suffer, nor own your love for him!"

"I cannot!" I shuddered, answering the thought aloud, adding in a trembling voice I would fain have made to seem unconcerned, "I cannot write to Stirling to-night. Milord, are you hungry, thirsty? Let me at least order in supper," and, escaping from the nether gloom to blackest darkness outside, I made my way to the portress, who, in a gloomy *parloir* was with the French *bonne*, supping off some potage or other in which garlic steamed.

Her I despatched to a neighbouring hostelry, with a written order, and she presently returned with a tray, a mode in which we had been served often with better fare than the *bonne* was willing to cook. This she brought upstairs, muttering in her usual mumble, "*Si, Monsieur le mari a retournons; tres bien.*"

"Not for me," said Kilmarnock, spreading hands of rejection, "I am too unhappy to eat, almost to live. My God! I hope the first shot will tear its way to my heart, then I shall be at rest, at peace, cease to feel this cruel indifference."

In trying to open it, I dropped an oyster, cutting my hand with the knife—a lucky accident, as at sight of it he sprang from his seat, momently forgetting his disquiet, and skilfully binding the hurt in a linen kerchief. Then somehow, for men are but mortal, the sight of the well-arranged viands tempted him to remember that he had ridden far and fast, and the room being now brightly lit, changed for a time even the darkness of despair.

"My dear," said he, presently, watching me as I peeled a walnut, "if you are not French, or a demon, what are you? You have flitted from a furnace, unharmed!"

"Not an earthly furnace," thought I, "the furnace of a selfless love, whose fire is from Heaven."

Yet when, pleading fatigue, which was indeed stamped on every tired limb and haggard feature, he left me to repair to his neighbouring lodging, I sat for awhile thinking; then, feeling lonely, bolted the outer oaken door.

'Twas now near eight o'clock—a somewhat larger fire than usual on the wide hearth, candles showing in brightest light the centre of the large room, casting with smoky shadows almost twilight into the remoter corners.

I drew near the fire a small desk, and began to write to Casimir. To my consternation I found I had nothing to say. Crowding events had happened, perils incurred, battles fought, himself, justly praised, honoured, loved—yet the paper before me remained obstinately blank. As one possessed I sat in this trance, trying in vain to force my thoughts into order, to force phrases of affection from my pen—in vain. In vain! oh, God! had I ceased to love him?—or is it, said a hollow echo from my heart, that you love too much to be able readily to express it?

"Write first to your friend," suggested the voice; "friendship is but the shadow of love, yet by so doing you will bring before you the substance."

A fatal suggestion, at which I paused; then, hurried on by hope of its breaking the spell, I commenced a letter to Sergius. In it I meant but to convey some general expressions of friendship, nor to do more by this than shake off the disinclination to write at all. "'Twill go into the fire," thought I, and began.

Alas! the very alacrity of my thoughts in setting about this new task should have warned me. Once in, a new, a resistless impulse seized me—as a cyclone a doomed ship. I wrote—on—on. I told of my still deep sorrow for Sir Burleigh, of my gratitude to him, of the vast loss he was to my life—which now he was gone from it seemed but to me as a tale that is told, a weariness and striving with the shadows of the past, an ever-present struggle to make amends, to expiate so far as I might, by this marriage, the blot to his name. I confessed that the love I bore Stuart was but that which tolerates from habit—the shadow of a passion; that I admired him, felt for his heroic acts and heroic sufferance all the ardour of an adherent, the fervour of a Royalist; seeing in him the cause of justice, of right, yet ever drifting apart, convinced of the slight hold that was now mine on his capricious affection—the slighter now for the legal bond which, to his haughty and intractable mind, represented a compulsory force, weakening whatever love had remained mine.

To none could I confide all these haunting thoughts, besetting and harassing me in the silence and solitude of a life so beforetime wrapped and shielded in Sir Burleigh's love. As I shaped them into words, many of them

changed, Proteus fashion, into kinder memories of Casimir—a conflict, for, against him, awoke. Tears rained down at memory of some isolated kindness, some sacrifice of his own wishes; anon anger awoke, when his selfish preferences for mere beauty's sake in a moment outweighed with him—as in Pearlie Cameron—the memories of his vows. To a woman, proud, haughty, changing as himself, he would be a fitting lover. For me, the unchanging, undeviating, faithful affection of Sergius was dearer and nobler.

In all this was no thought of desertion—no single thought. As a slave may dream of freedom, of a love unshadowed by fear, so these dreams were writ.

Close by was the fire, leaping and sparkling for its prey. More than once my hands raised the close-writ sheets to cast them away. Then putting by the pen I left them.

A knocking at the outer door came presently, and the porter's gruff voice through it, announcing Mr. Casimir. Surprised, yet glad, I swiftly unbolted the outer door, and waited to respond to a glad greeting.

The snow on his boots, however, for awhile engaged his attention; then his plaid, which, also flecked with snowflakes, he took off and gave to the porter to get dried; then a packet he

desired him to convey to the Lawnmarket. Free, at length, he passed in in silence, whilst I, remaining unnoticed to close the door, trembled alike with cold and apprehension, knowing that sometimes these sullen moods lasted for hours, nor would not be exorcised.

"What is amiss?" said I humbly, at length, when, seated near the fire, I saw how a fierce anger burned in his dulled eyes, half hid by contracted brows.

"Nothing," said he, "I am tired. Nell, you need not expect that ceremony of observance you formerly exacted. It must suffice that I am no longer lover, but husband."

"I exact nothing," said I, offended. "When it is your pleasure to speak, you may do so."

I retired to my desk, and opening it at random, in a sort of confused anger and grief, saw the dangerous pages just penned.

"They are the truth," thought I bitterly, my heart aching, mine eyes burning at this petty humiliation put upon me. The courage and carelessness of eighteen were mine no longer. Then I would smile at these moods. Now they affected me as a blow might have done—slight, unharmful, yet terrible from a hand one loved.

"Have you supped?" said I presently, re-

solved that in whatever anger I would neglect no outward duty or observance.

"Yes," was the sullen response.

"Sir," said I, in a flash of sudden wrath, "I will not put up with this Highland wolf treatment. If you cannot express your grievances or troubles, you must, as do others, conceal them."

"Your pardon!" said he, rising and bowing low. "I come heartsore, footsore, tired, weary, worn out in mind and body, and you require courtliness, flattery, frothy compliment, your appetite for which must be insatiable, since five hours of Kilmarnock's society, but just ended, would otherwise have satisfied it."

"Come," said I, laughing at having thus discovered the source of this swelling Nile of indignation, "you know Sergius better than that. He came as your messenger—as my friend. Was I to speak to him through the grille—demand his credentials? Can it be he had not your authority for coming?"

"I thought," said he, without a direct reply to this, "that I could not get away; but, contrary to my wish, the siege of Stirling is raised, so I came too."

"On the track of Tarquin?" said I with a little yawn.

At which, in spite of himself, he laughed.

"Helen," said he, presently, as sitting at his feet on a tabouret I gently chafed his cold hands, "you are the sweetest influence of my life. My darling, what seas of trouble, tempests of clouds, roll away at the upraising of this beautiful golden head."

"Oh," said I, "my Narcissus, do not gaze yourself into a flower! Seriously, tell me all your disquiet—let me at least sympathise if I cannot help."

"They are legion." He moodily drew off and flung aside his damp boots, then went into various complaints of the different chiefs, which I echoed indignantly. Though ignorant of their value, I felt they were dealing hardly with him, exacting a high-handed authority in return for their aid.

A thousand kisses beguiled him of his griefs. He ceased to think of them. We drifted into an oasis of perfect peace. In this sweet atmosphere I thought no more of Sergius, of my complaints of isolation, my dread loneliness. From his presence grief winged away—in it reflection died.

"Ten thousand griefs, cares, will die for you in this marriage," Sergius had said, and the prophecy was true. Murmured words of future

years seemed to write them in letters of gold. As shadows rise gloomily in absence of the sun, and disperse before its rays, so all, even justest repinings, were banished by his presence.

* * * * *

An iron frost held sway over the city that twelfth of January. Windows were whitened with rime, hands and faces of the poor ground and blackened.

"How cold for the troops," said I, shivering, "and for you, dearest!"

"My poor, brave fellows!" said he, "I ought to be with them; yet not one who, being so near, would not have stolen a moment to see his wife, as I have—if he loved her as I do."

"I have a despatch," he went on. "From it I find that Hawley, the Hanover general, is at Callendar House with Lady K., who is professedly a Hanoverian for her son's sake. There she will keep him and his staff as long as possible. His troops are at Falkirk. My design is to send a body of men towards them by the straight road, openly, and with the rest to sweep round upon them by the south road. Falkirk Muir will thus separate us, to win the crest of which will be to secure a victory. I make no doubt of doing this, the broken ground below is untenable for cavalry, and there is a morass into which

we can jam the artillery. Thus, sweet, we have them. To-morrow I must again be on the wing; to-day is devoted to a few calls, notably one on Paterson, who has promised to advance me some three thousand pounds."

"The last time I was at his bank," said I, incautiously——

"Yes," said he, "was it as a borrower?" He spoke jestingly, apparently supposing it to have been a visit with Sir Burleigh, who needed not to borrow.

I hesitated but for a second, yet his keen eyes noted some embarrassment.

"Why," said he angrily, "did not you ask me for what you needed? It never occurred to me that Sir Burleigh might have been short of money, though I now remember he was, as he designed writing to France to his steward, and could not have done so. Helen, you have used me ill in this, I shall ask Paterson your indebtedness."

"Do not," said I, with some apprehension. "Surely, sir, with my fortune, I may deal with any bank I prefer?"

"Yes," said he. "But who introduced you? Sir Burleigh's agents were Craig and Saunder. Madam, I demand an answer. My God! you dare tell me that you went to Kilmarnock for

money—that you have borrowed from Paterson on his note of hand—you, who so well understand finance? What will be inferred from this? Friendship! A man who is poor as myself let you borrow to the extent of his credit with his banker, from friendship? Do you think Paterson a fool, as you are yourself—Sergius a fool, who knows what construction will be put on this, who has planned for it?"

"What is the opinion of an old banker to me?" said I haughtily.

"Even," said he in a fury, stamping, "should he infer from this obliging arrangement that there has been on one part 'value received?'"

"Even so! What then? I am to pay him again; my note says so, see!"

I placed a copy of each in his hand. His anger deepened.

"'Tis worse," said he, "than the worst folly; but 'tis Kilmarnock I will reckon with. His business, had he guessed you to need money, was to inform me, or at least leave you to do so. How dared he put this dishonour upon me?"

"There is no dishonour," said I angrily. "He will receive it back with usury, twenty per cent., a hundred. Whatever he may claim, nothing shall be grudged nor refused—thought too much, or its payment delayed—and that he

knows. Why do you show so ignoble a spirit? he would have lent it you equally. As to Paterson, 'tis his business to record his debts, not to judge his debtors."

"You dare utter all this to me?"

"To you or anyone; 'tis the truth. Casimir, why will you make me unhappy? What is Paterson to us, or his conjectures—a banker, a mere dealer in money, who for so long as he receives value for it is content? The fortune that is now mine would warrant a very Shylock in lending to me, and that he must know."

A livid pallor spread over Stuart's face, his teeth locked together, his eyes gleamed with that dull indrawn wrath that is like the darkness of a thunder-cloud.

"What is your fortune, madam, with which you thus reproach me, justify yourself for thus dragging my honour to the dust?"

"'Tis over one hundred thousand pounds," say I, eagerly, "more than enough to repay my borrowings. I do not reproach you. If you loved me you would not go to Paterson for money."

"A parrot speech," said he, "that Sergius has said to you—deny it if you dare!"

"I do love him," said I, with equal anger, "I have never denied it. I would be obliged to him sooner than to anyone on earth. Should he

discern any error of judgment he would reprove as a friend."

"Error," said he scornfully, "in you! He would sooner own to atheism. What his faith may be when claiming you—as he now may—is for the future to show. Go to him—I am heartbroke. My God! let me fall at Falkirk! This is sure the last stroke of your rod. Never think of me again, a poor and broken bankrupt, a lover who is scorned for his poverty; turned to contempt by the friend he trusted, the woman he loved; made a byword, his mistress in the present pay of another man!"

"Sir," said I, setting wide the door, in anger, "you were better with your troopers. Go to Falkirk; and, win or lose, never dream I will forgive this, either for Sergius' sake or my own."

Had I but reflected that 'twas but the expression of a rankling jealousy, ever present with him where Kilmarnock was concerned, I might —oh, bitter after memory!—have soothed it away by mildness or entreaties. As it was, seizing his plaid, his face white, and working with passion, without a word of farewell, a look, he departed; and I bolted the door on a solitude of misery and anguish unutterable—as that of a scorpion in a ring of fire.

The terrible and sudden change from peace

and pleasantness, after long gloom and solitude, to this open war, this unjust and cruel attack, crushed me to the earth. Of what use striving to propitiate so harsh a judge, so fierce and uncertain a master? Best at once to cast off the chain of a love which seemed now but torment. Yet who that has once worn a chain knows not the difficulty of getting free?—the thousand invisible ties, the millionfold thoughts which refuse to obey the will and to remain in banishment!

In the wintry night I sat, unheeding the darkness gathering without, creeping in; the silence which extinguished, or so it seemed, the fire; the intense and numbing cold, Sir Burleigh, who had never let me suffer, who had wrapped me in the thick mantle of his love from all reproach, from all neglect—was he dead? Tears for him burst from mine eyes. What would be his suffering could he see me now—a despised, condemned, deserted wretch, sitting alone, friendless, in this wintry cold!

"Oh, my dear," thought I, with voiceless sobs, "I should have died with you, for none other will forgive even the least of my faults, have patience with me."

* * * * *

The city lamps were lit, and swung dim and

distant through the falling snow. In my dark and cheerless room, a gleam of light shone from one placed high on some opposing building. It showed the table, with the two white papers cast down by Stuart.

Had I but held silence, remembered the dangerous shallows in his nature, the rocks of pride, of sensitiveness, the differences between him and Sergius, which rendered the kind and friendly forethought of supplying me with money to spare him the pain of confessing poverty, almost, from his point of view, an insult—had I but thought him less noble, I had avoided this unnecessary anger, which hurt me more from its pettiness, for him than for myself. Yet how could I fathom that so simple an act of friendship would bear so harsh construction, so false and ignoble an inference?

* * * * * *

"I am writing with fingers nigh frost-bitten"—this was a letter from Kilmarnock—"to tell you, my dear, that we have won at Falkirk Muir. Victory is ours—more complete than could have been hoped for. 'Twas a race between Hawley's troops, who were pursuing us on the road, and our men, who were stealing up unseen behind the edge of the muir, which should first win the high ground. Of course,

the Highlanders won it. Ha, ha! there's a jest for you. Highlanders can take high ground sometimes. He has been doing so—I mean Casimir—with me; but, my dear, I do not much regard it, so that I can keep you well with him. Paterson was the theme this time. I should have had but little difficulty in scraping through, only for Paterson's d——d impudence and imprudence in mentioning the ciphered letter you writ me. He asked for it, and, to make a long story short, I gave it him; upon which, the mistakes in it so tickled him, that he laughed himself into serenity again with both, and begged my pardon, sending a savage despatch to Paterson, apprising him of our victory, which brought a reply in specie—for Paterson is quite of opinion that all power is of God, and hopes to keep his bank safe by being well with us; though he would try to be equally well with Cumberland, should he enter Edinburgh to-morrow.

"By the way, talking of Cumberland or Hanover, a troop of Hawley's Horse deserted to us on the eve of the battle—some twenty in number, all fine stalwart young fellows, and Scots, who seemed delighted to be at length on the right side, and fought well, fraternising heartily with our men.

"The Prince was pleased, as well he might be, for it inspirited our men, and put the dumps into the deserted party.

"Hawley is a brute, but we have so completely beat him, that would C. E. but follow it up we should be adding victories to our list every day; but he will go back on Stirling, against all advice. It seems hard to you perhaps, that he should not please himself, now that he has thus demonstrated his power as a leader; but we older Generals know that sieges are not for us with our small force; nor Highlanders at any time. Yet he will on with his formula: 'You will see! You will see!' when, perchance, what we shall see will be ruin and disaster.

"'What an old crow is Sergius!' you will say, 'to croak thus, on top of a brilliant victory.' Ah, my sweet! could one but put grey heads on ivory shoulders—! I mean this literally; but Stirling is the word, and with this new accession of men and money Alexander of Macedon was not more peremptory or prouder. I am obliged to come into Edinbro' to see Paterson. May I call to ask for your Ladyship's health?"—("If that is all," thought I with a smile, "I can reply through the grille.")—"I have, besides, a packet to bring you from him. He is so taken up with

military ardour as to at last leave no room for jealousy, as there is, truly, no ground for it."

"Why, what bright mistress have you met?" thought I, "that I am thus forgot?"

So, fixing his arrival for the following Wednesday, concluded this letter; and, so good was the news it brought, I put it under my pillow for company, and perhaps because of that dreamt of Sergius.

I had ordered in leaves and berries to decorate the rooms, waxlights to illumine, fire to warm, wine to inspire. Of what use to receive a victor from a well-fought field coldly?

To tease Sergius, who was mightily fond of pranks, being not too old to laugh at them, I received him at the grille, and alleged, with a sorrowful voice, that there he must stay, nor venture into the lion's den.

"I have the lion's commands," said he, pleading hard, with a dismayed face, against this, "yet will obey your Ladyship, if it must be so."

"So it must be, milord." A shade, not all of the dark afternoon, spread over his face; a weary sigh, not all of fatigue, escaped his lips, as he prepared to pass through the grille the packet.

"Let me bring it up," said he, "'tis heavy. Helen, I will not stay; only suffer me to speak

to you, face to face. So far I have come on your errand—have so much to tell you."

"But, sir, there is Callendar House. Must I have it on my conscience, the keeping you thence?"

"I have been," he asserted, "nor shall return there, but to Stirling."

"Open the door," said I, to the grim portress, who had listened impassively, not understanding a word, to this dialogue.

A minute later he found himself in the decorated *salon*, brilliant with its illumination, and looked at me, half bewildered.

"Are you holding a reception?" he asked—his eyes more widely open than should have been those of so consummate a courtier—with surprise.

"Yes," said I, "a few folk to meet you and hear of Falkirk."

"Then I will not stay," said he indignantly. "I have had enough of the few folk at Callendar."

"And you," said I, barring his way to the door, "professed to pity me for my solitude."

Laughing at his angry mortification, I at length bid him believe my guests would not come.

"They are not invited. I have none but distant acquaintance in the city—and for fifty

other reasons which might have occurred to you was you not so prepossessed."

Then we talked of Falkirk, of the effect of victory on the impetuous Highlanders, of the icy check to their ardour that the return to the siege of Stirling would be.

"It causes discontent to all," he alleged. "We mean to memorialize him against it, as, while the grass grows, the steed starves. A siege is—as you, a student of De Comines, must know—unfitted for a hazardous warfare such as ours, against so overwhelming a force as England sends—a foolish and ruinous proceeding. We must go on, avalanche fashion, carrying all by assault, or be content to see our small power melt away in the comparative inaction that this Stirling siege is. I have remonstrated, but in vain. To think what a reverse to our arms implies unnerves me—yet we are by this seeking it. Helen, I would you was in France, my dear; 'twould be a sensible relief to me to know you in assured safety. The very few folk you know in Edinbro' would, in any reverse, be so taken up with themselves—families, dependants—as to have but little thought or feeling for one so isolated by fate and circumstance as you, whilst the very power Stuart wields now would in such case but help on your destruction.

Your being here is eminently unsafe, were he assured of victory. You are by his decree isolated and friendless. Defeat would throw you at once on the world, alone, with a terrible loneliness. In that case we should both be either dead or prisoners, and, widowed and friendless, you would run risks the more terrible, from your rank and beauty. None would dare aid you. For though but ourselves, and perhaps Home, know of your relation to Stuart, yet that Sir Burleigh was his chief friend and adviser would mark you out for relentless persecution, imprisonment, confiscation, fines, likely to the value of his personalty. My dear, these are not idle musings on an impossible event. Let us suppose a case: that we are vanquished, the city occupied by Hanover. Nell, my heart aches, I can scarce go on. There would be a carnage. Hawley, Cumberland, the greatest brutes on earth in command, what could be hoped or expected from their troops? It kills me to think of it—of all the poor people on whom his brute force would be spent. Where would you be? No asylum would be safe that the city could afford. The country would be unsafe equally to poverty or riches. You cannot tell the danger. I beseech you let me lay this before Casimir as your own earnest

entreaty, to be sent to France till affairs are settled. My own family have their arrangements made for instant flight; for though Boyd is safe, Margaret's share in delaying Hawley is known. They are at present unable to spare time to hunt down the smaller game; but once, if it so chance, the Lion is in the toils, but few else will escape. Margaret would gladly take charge of you; but why wait for danger, for confusion, for imminent risk, ere going? You cannot aid him by being here. 'Tis but a selfish and tyrannic exercise of authority to at once deprive you of friends, and expect in any danger that you will be safe. He has many friends there would gladly receive you as Sir Burleigh's widow—be kind to you; but his jealousy will, I fear, not suffer you to stir abroad. Yet one can but assay, and lay the right reason of it before him. Then, if he refuse, go for your own sake, and his too."

"I cannot," said I, "he has bid me stay here, and if all is lost for him, why should I be safe? He would be in peril of his life. Why not I? You are right, 'twould not advantage him, yet do not seek to send me away. A selfish, seeming desertion, though based on the most correct, unanswerable reasoning, would be a death-blow to any love he retains for me. I will take my

chance with the rest, nor be an omen of ill by deserting him in any case."

"Your remaining will do him no service, and assure peril to yourself. Beseech you listen to reason, before it is too late. All is uncertainty. We have hope, courage; but, my darling, the destruction, if it came, would be swift and terrible."

Again, again, again, he urged this flight, with reasons unassailable.

"Dear," said I, at length, "life would be but valueless to me—though a century could be assured—away from all I hold dear. Let me stay. If any reverse happened on my going, I should almost feel myself the cause."

On this he ceased, though with a dissatisfied brow. Some presage or foreboding seemed to hold his mind.

I begged his pardon for contravening his counsel, which, as ever, was wise and kind. I felt remorse that my obscure destiny should trouble him.

"I would fain," said I, "efface myself from your path, from your life, that you might never have suffered disquiet for me. Believe me unworthy the priceless boon of your friendship. Yet I cannot but rejoice in its possession. Do not remain angry or grieved."

"Do you, then, wish the whole sweetness of my life effaced? My darling, I am grieved only in fear for you; yet cannot wish you less noble loving, or steadfast than you are, even to assure your safety. Sweet, we will hope these gloomy thoughts to be but the clouds of sunrise."

So, ere he went, hope again reigned in our hearts.

Kilmarnock's words, so utterly unlike his usual calm philosophy, haunted me when he had gone. The sleeping, snow-clad city seemed as unlike a prey to plunder or rapine as could well be. Yet, not so long since it had resounded with acclaims of victory, with the march of thousands of soldiers, who, by favour of the citizens and fortune of war, had gained it unopposed—gained all but the grim Castle. How, had there been fighting?

Revels had been held, a monarch of its ancient dynasty crowned in the person of his son, who, as deputy, now held on a victorious career against usurping Hanover—yet. Yet! A sad foreboding crept to my heart. All was not won. Nay, all was still in uncertainty—an uncertainty the more dangerous for the intoxicating draughts of success, which, to the highly-strung nerves of leader and followers, seemed an

absolute assurance of completion, when, to an onlooker, the work, though promising, seemed scarce begun. Had Sergius prophesied smooth things I should have believed that difficulties, now looming large, and the more dangerous for the sanguine spirit in which they were viewed by the Jacobites, were less than my fears. But, in speaking as he did, he aroused a lurking echo in my own heart, a dread, a doubt, a fear I had before banished as disloyal to Casimir and the cause alike.

> "In place of beauty, burning.
> In place of well-set hair, baldness."

The prophet who, in addressing his ominous warning to the city, the daughter of Zion, had used these figures to convey his meaning, did well. To imagine the desolation of a large and peopled city is hard; to bring the mind to the contemplation of one mournful and desolate being, as a nucleus whence imagination may radiate to all around, brings desolation the more vividly before us. Yet, again, in shrinking to the contemplation of individual peril, only one image arose. With dread I strove to banish it, to supply its place with another; yet again and again I seemed to see the brave, the patient, the heroic Kilmarnock. This is terrible! In self-condemning despair I strove to think of

Casimir, who, as leader, ran the greater peril, as loser would suffer the dearer loss.

"You are alone!" seemed to utter impatiently a soul tired of the eternal conflict for, against him. "Why do you, of whom the world knows nothing, cares nothing, for ever strive to propitiate what is to others an *alter ego*, to you but an abstraction? You, who love Sergius—dare you not own it to yourself?—own his superiority, his nobility, his self-sacrifice; must you be for ever striving against the truth, to equalize the stature of a giant and a dwarf—of a man who cares for you only in that you can yet please his sight, who could cast you away for a newer fashion of beauty with as great unconcern as a woman would throw aside one jewel, one robe, for another—and of another who loves you as his own soul?"

Tired of this contention, which was endless, in that in this life it could have no definite solution, conscious that, in forcing on this shadowy and unlegal marriage with Stuart, Sergius had but sought my peace and his own safety, the thought would recur again and yet again:—

"Why did you not remain free? Why enter into a bondage which will be for you lifelong? let Casimir regard it as lightly as he may—as he

will. A few years, and mutual indifference will render irksome even an outward observance of love—a love kept alive by obstacles, as a spark of fire by heaped-up thorn-bushes, that, left unhindered, had long since died out."

In the marriage itself I could see little else of his feeling than that jealousy of possession which children evince in refusing to give away a broken or unvalued toy, lest another should be richer than they.

"God forgive me!" thought I, "if I misjudge him, if I the rather desire that this may be his feeling than endeavour to arrive at a just conclusion; rather encourage a morbid hypersensitiveness than, as he says, take it that, being no new thing, love assumes an aspect of coldness and indifference. Ah! no, not love, a fleeting fancy! A thousand years of chance and change, and, could we then meet, still would Sergius' eyes wear that earnest and tender light for me."

"Fire," said I, presently—aloud, to break up this sweet musing—"do not you go out, my only present friend, companion!" and, heaping on logs, I moved restlessly about the room, removing the boughs and berries with which I had welcomed the news of Falkirk Muir. Throwing them a-heap on to an armchair, I fed the fire

with them. They had served their turn, and should not wither nor tarnish, but in memory remain ever fresh. They had welcomed victory and pleased Sergius, so should have honourable sepulture.

* * * * *

Stirling was still helping, by the inaction of the siege, to melt away the Prince's small army, at its utmost number amounting to something less than ten thousand. His wiser counsellors were in despair. 'Twas at length resolved to memorialise him that the siege might be raised, and the troops marched on Inverness.

This was done, and in the uttermost anger a consent was granted that the siege should be abandoned, and they should march on Inverness.

He visited Edinbro', disclosing this to me in parcels, with a bitterness of wrath against his chiefs which rendered counsel dangerous. Yet, steeling myself in a sense of duty to him, I boldly avowed my concurrence with the advice of his Generals.

"Who," said he ironically, "has so well instructed you, my fine madam, in the relative value of sieges and battles?"

I dared not say Sergius, whose letters were my text-books. I was, too, ill. The long severe winter just passed had, now spring was come,

shown its ill-effect in lassitude and dejection. I yet feebly endeavoured to think for him, my tired brain only now half able to grasp the stupendous magnitude of the interests involved, seeing with astonished eyes the sullen and cold fury with which he found his own will overborne, even in his own interest, and fearing he might yet influence some amongst the younger chiefs, to a rash assertion of ill-timed authority, opposed to discretion and counsel.

"What a wretched moping ghost you look!" said he at length, irritated at my agreement with the counsellors. "I did not come to you for advice, but for beauty, wit, change, rest; and you do but sit, croak, croak, like a marsh frog."

"I would be cheerful if I could. Can I, when you are in peril?"

"I am in no peril. Madam, you are enough to turn one to stone!"

His eyes had but anger in them, his lips a sort of contempt. Illness and languor had combined to render me careless of my dress, and he had come straight to me from Callendar House, where Margaret Cameron was staying, doubtless in full blaze of beauty, colour, and health.

"Is this the best you can say to me?"

"Had I, then, best say nothing to you? Is your unquiet craving for flattery, for smoothness,

to be fed at the expense of truth? Must you, for all my sacrifices, but demean yourself to me like some unpolished peasant? I tell you, coming from Callendar and its circle to this gloomy den, where you have chose to hide yourself, is like coming from earth to a nether hell."

I bent my head lower, yet lower, as a torrent of denunciation swept over me. Ill and miserable, I tried a propitiatory speech. It was scorned, and but increased the bitterness of his words—taunts.

With his mind infuriated at the thwarting of his plans, his pride as victor at Falkirk smarting at having to defer to the military genius of others, his eyes dazzled anew by the brilliant young beauty of the Cameron, and contrasting with it my wan and weary dejection, he had everything wherewith to feed anger at me. Nor could I even try to charm it away by soft words. Anger has a dangerous contagion in it. As he went on I raised my eyes to his, seeking in them some relenting, some show that the words were but breath, nor indications of his mind and heart, meeting only coldest scorn from their dull blue glance.

"Then," said I, an evil fire springing to my heart, "by this, sir, you justify an opinion I have long formed of you."

He stopped and listened, with a curled lip.

"Nor need you look like that," I went on, "your cruelty shows conspicuous enough without. If you ever loved me——"

"I never have, Milady Clifford."

"That is what I also think. We are now quits, for I no longer love you. You can go from this nether hell, from the evil spirit—for such live in hell, in torments, do they not, as I do here?—and take with you the conviction that we shall never meet again on earth."

"The better for me," said he ironically.

"So I hope it may prove." I wrapped my plaid round me and walked away, again, for the second time, wandering up the stairs in a cruel bewilderment, through a suite of empty, dusty rooms, giving him leave to choose his own time of departure, and an hour after returning to find him gone, something flashing in the firelight on the table. 'Twas a scrawled paper fastened down by a dirk.

"Helen," was writ on it, "by God! you shall repent driving me from you. I have sworn on the dirk never to see you again, and will keep my word to the bitter end."

"If I can aid, you shall." I dashed dirk and paper alike in the fire, and sat down to think.

"Thus is this bubble pricked," thought I.

"The rest of his leisure will be spent with the Cameron," and, lingering no longer than to pack a kist with my clothes and books, I took a hired hackney, having burned all the papers in my desk, and drove in the dusk to that quarter of the city called Petty France, from the numbers of its poor French residents, where were always, as I had before seen, lodgings of every sort agape for inmates; where, for a moderate rental, I got a set of forlorn-looking rooms, yet clean. The people were French Huguenots—booksellers and binders. I lived above the dingy shop, and had such attendance as they chose to give me. As widow of one who fell at Prestonpans—which was the account I gave of myself—my silence and dejection were accounted for.

Hearing all around me ever the voluble chattering of this rookery, I but seldom spoke, living in a torpor referable to illness, which was increased by the wretched and meagre diet.

Sometimes I would try to arouse myself, to read some of the old-old French romaunts, which were piled on shelves in the shop, and to which the courtesy of the shopkeeper had made me welcome. 'Twas in vain. With a dusty tome on my lap the dull retrospection of long-past scenes came ever back to me, seeming as

'twere a hundred years since I had been participant in them.

One day the old man in the shop gently hinted that I had not paid him; that I had been there a month. They were poor people, and sorry to trouble Madame, but—, a deprecating shrug, a bow, full of compassion and pitifulness, for they supposed my means were but slender, whereas I had forgot the whole detail of this visionary life, as in dreams one passes over connecting links. There was so much poverty in this quarter—some of improvidence, most of grinding want—that a philosophy had sprung from its contemplation — the philosophy of tolerance. The rich are uneasy if their stewards cannot account for every crown; the poor live in hope that some day—some day the crowns will be accounted for.

"I will pay you," said I abstractedly, yet startled, feeling for money in my reticule, in my pocket, and finding none, "but I must first go to the bank."

"Any time, any time, madame." He bowed himself out.

The bank—represented in that quarter by the Mont-de-piété—doubtless he thought, as I passed languidly through the shop, enveloped in my plaid, that I had some chain or ring I meant to

obtain money for; but he looked down as he snipped at the vellum being fashioned to fit a volume, and made no comment. Poverty of every kind was too well represented there to be in any form a novelty. The busy life of the city was to me but as part of this lethargic dream in which my life was bound. The wild March wind whirled me back in thought to the Manor, and there on the edge of the black lake my thoughts stayed, stagnant, despairing.

"Oh, my God! let me sleep always!" I prayed, as a rough foot-passenger jostled me in the roadway.

"Dinna hurt the lassie, or the gude-wife!" commented another, half stopping to peer at me, though the original of his remark was out of earshot of the remonstrance.

The remonstrant was Doctor Porteous.

"Gude Lord!" he muttered, "'tis like Milady Clifford."

By now I had passed on. He hesitated, but as I gave no token of recognition, concluded himself mistaken, and went on.

'Twas no matter to me to be recognized or no —a wretched forsaken existence, a hold on life which was precarious as that of some wretch in breakers, clinging to a wreck with helpless, feeble hands. I entered Paterson's Bank.

'Twas evening, but varying rumours set hours of business at defiance. Country customers who would be served; letters from the camp at Stirling; despatches from Stuart announcing the different movements and their hoped-for results as reasons for more funds being forthcoming; all these combined to keep the worthy partners late at work. My business was at once attended to by Mr. Paterson, and with a store of guineas I departed, not having refused Paterson's offer of a teller's escort for safety's sake—from indifference. All this life, movement, seemed unreal. These busy folk, to whom money was the chief interest, happy, in that they could be so easily satisfied.

"My God!" thought I, thinking of the enormous effort of the journey, "why were not all created alike?—that I, now holding this gold, might at the least be no more a sufferer than these, who are satisfied and pleased now their hands are filled?"

I wandered back again—wandering best befitting the tired body, the torpid mind—and gave, uncounted, some guineas to the old bookseller.

"Is that enough?" I murmured, toiling exhausted up the dusty stairs, regardless whether it was or no.

He followed me. "'Tis more than Madame

owes." He placed two of the coins on the table and withdrew.

* * * *

"Craig wrote to me"—a week later, Kilmarnock was sitting beside me, my hand in his —"or I had not found you out. My God! to think of the villainy of that man, to whom your whole life has been a sacrifice! I asked George Murray to send me to Edinbro'. I begged, as for my life, he would devise a business hither for me, and he did, to get money for the troops, of Paterson. Helen, I vow to Heaven I will go to the Hanover side. I will not be on his side —fight in his cause. Oh! my sweet darling, to see your beauty faded—your life ebbing thus! Do not shrink from me! Where are you better than in the arms of one who loves you? Jealousy's self could not grudge a dying girl the embrace of a friend. I will stay with you. What are disgrace, imputed desertion to me? But do not fear, that is arranged for. Rest your poor tired head awhile on a heart that loves you."

Murmuring Dante's lines as we sat in the dim firelit room:—

> "Were I only still so light that in
> A thousand years I could advance one inch,
> I had already started on my way,
> Seeking you out amongst this squalid folk."

he kissed my closed eyelids till I slept awhile, waking to find his grave and noble face bending over me—a veritable guardian angel. Later he entreated me to go to Callendar House.

"There is a veritable asylum," said he. "All the wives and widows, *in esse* and *in posse*, have congregated around Margaret, who makes them welcome."

"Dear," said I, "you are but a man. Would you have me walk unarmoured into the midst of a burning fiery furnace of eyes, of tongues? Formerly 'twould not trouble me, but now—now! —do not you be cruel. 'Left and abandoned of of my velvet friends, give me leave to be unseen by them.'"

Cheerful as he was to me, he had but gloomy views of the war—prophetically so, again urging upon me that all was uncertainty, that France was my best refuge, my safest rest—offering Saunder as escort, as attendant.

"From day to day is danger. From hour to hour, divided councils, impracticable chiefs—everyone set on his own plans—I see but little light in the fast-gathering clouds. Even the enthusiasm, which as yet was our chief motive power, wanes, as the stubborn and unyielding spirit of Casimir continually thwarts wiser counsels. His formula: 'You will see! you

will see!' has lost its prestige since we have seen reverses, and I much fear that we are a divided household—wisdom on the one part, courage on the other. United they were irresistible, but they are drifting apart yet more and more. I shall do what I can, and if all fails, give up my sword to Hanover—for a chaos, in which lives are for ever sinking, uselessly, is but a form of murder."

"Do not forget the perfidiousness of Hanover," said I, half angrily, half sorrowful, at the dejection of his tone and manner.

"Oh, Nell!" said he, in a little impatience, "this useless slaughter must not go on. Could you but see it, for a day, but realize the agony of one of the dying, on either side, you would not, to seat an archangel on the throne, bid it go on. 'Tis not that alone; I am no more pitiful than other men. 'Tis the uselessness of trying for a prize which the obstinacy of the would-be wearer places ever out of reach. But, sweet, I will not weary you, believe that 'twill be no coward's surrender for me."

"Don't talk of surrender, 'tis so ill-omened."

I walked away from him.

"Nell," said he, "I spoke to you as to my own soul—to be misinterpreted. If it please you to think me capable of baseness, of desertion——"

"It had so terrible a sound. Oh, Sergius, pity him, even if he be obstinate! You were friends once. A thousand lives such as mine ought not to sever your friendship from him now."

"Nor will they," said he harshly. "The effect of friendship—all the aid, counsel, I can give shall be his, as though you did not exist; but——"

A stern and terrible look stole to his eyes as they glanced at the drearness of the stifling lodgment, and rested on my thin and trembling hands—a faithful index of sorrow and suffering. Awhile after he went, having made me promise to see Porteous, whom he would send, and leaving renewed hope, belief, and peace. Since that dearest friend still loved me, all was not desolation!

* * * *

Getting back strength and health under the kind care of Doctor Porteous, whose chiefest charm for restoration was that, being Kilmarnock's friend, he would talk of and extol him to me. The spring had reached into April, and, a late visit over, I went to the window to see, so far as roofs and chimneys admitted, the opal hues of sunset melting into the sapphire of the evening sky; when, glancing down into the wynd I saw a sight, which from some, as then

undetermined, cause, turned my blood to ice. 'Twas Ailsie Fraser, capless, plaidless, with long dishevelled tresses flying wildly about her; a few idlers following her; a boy throwing at her, more for mischief than malice, pieces of wood, from a faggot of boughs he carried on his shoulders? Ailsie excited, weeping, wringing her hands, uttering incoherent ejaculations, in dire distress. 'Twas more than I could bear, to see the harmless poor wretch suffer, and not relieve her. I assumed my plaid, and went rapidly downstairs and out into the wynd.

"Ailsie," said I—disregarding the stares, the jeers of the little throng—"bind up your hair, lassie, and come with me. I am kind to you, am I not?"

Sobbing, Ailsie stopped, but to hurl a defiance at the spectators.

"Ye mock me now. Wait till the Butcher gets ye, as he has Kilmarnock, bonnie Charlie, an' the rest. Ay, wait; yese no mock Ailsie then."

The group dispersed, half laughing, half with that reverent belief in the utterance of madness that lives in the hearts of the uninstructed, as in those of Moslems.

Half fainting I took her hand and led her in, and so up to my room.

"For God's sake unsay it!" I cried. "What do you mean? What news have you? Do you wish ill to Kilmarnock, whom your own mother nursed? Can ye not wish even him well?"

"I tell ye," said she wildly, "Will is in the hands of the Butcher, Cumberland. I am nigh daft with grief. Culloden! ah, Culloden! 'Tis lost, mem—the battle—lost, lost, lost, lost, lost! Ah! for puir brave Will to be ta'en; better dead than ta'en!"

"My God!" I sank trembling, as with ague, into a seat. "Is it true? Oh, Ailsie! are you but dreaming it? Tell me true. It kills me!"

"'Tis true," said she hoarsely. "I had it frae a fugitive. Sune they will be flyin' frae the crool, crool troopers o' Hanover. Oh, mem, sae fast as horses can pit hoofs to ground sae fast will they be here, and blood rinnin like water. Ah, mileddy, dinna ye stay. Ye are kenned. Ye, for yere bonny face an' kenned a Jacobite, is doomed to death. 'Twas ye I cam' to warn, for puir Will's sake, an' yere ain, wha was gude to me; an' he luved ye. Poor Will! him that's noo in the hands of Cumberland."

"Dinna ye stay here," she repeated apprehensively. "I but tell ye true, that ta'en, yours is nae easy 'scape. Come whiles is yet time. I cam for ye to hide ye; believe me, the time is

but short when every fugitive will be stopped an' stabbed. Ye dinna ken the first o' the horrors o' war, though ye hae lived wi' generals. Ailsie kens them. Come wi' me. The city overrun ye canna 'scape. Noo is the time; haste ye, bring food, claithes, money, jools—I will hide ye weel. Oh, trust me, I am sane the noo!"

She knelt at my feet, her blue uplifted eyes strained and haggard, with a listening fear, yet free from madness.

Some instinct of the truth of her story moved me. It was now dark, a starry April sky inviting the city folk to outdoor gossip.

"Will, Will, Will!" My heart beat violently, my temples throbbed, as, aided by Ailsie, whom I induced to wrap a plaid round her, I packed up some linen, my jewels, and a few warm clothes, together with the remains of food—burnt all writings in the interests of my hosts, and, creeping down an hour or two later, followed Ailsie along the now silent streets. She stopped once or twice and bought each time food—and yet food.

"Ye dinna ken, ye dinna ken," was her answer to all remonstrance. "I tak' ye oot o' the track o' robbers, o' murderers, o' worse; 'tis noo ae ane for himsel', and the Butcher tak' the hindermost."

Rapidly, nerved with fear, we sped on to Arthur's Seat.

"No' to thae ruins," said she, pointing to the hermit's chapel, "I ken better than that; they will be searched."

On and on. A weary way.

Once I thought of returning on my steps, of going to Callendar House, of demanding protection from the Camerons—yet all were but at best acquaintance, who, if the worst came, would have ado to save themselves. Ailsie was a friend, humble, by report loathly, yet too true to let self-interest sway her against me.

Here—looking back on that time of horror—I must pause to thank God, who had it put into my heart to pity and befriend this desolate creature—to treat her without scorn, to believe that, though condemned by all, God would not willingly pardon any who struck or injured one "whom He had afflicted."

From that awful hour, when tidings came to the trembling citizens of the success of the brutal Hanoverians, till I escaped thence, Ailsie saved me from a thousand perils. Over and over again the few kind words, the scanty acts of courtesy and consideration I had from compassion showed her, were repaid a hundredfold.

"I desired mercy and not sacrifice." The awful

Judge, who speaks thus to His creatures, how little heeded is His will by the rich, the proud, the great—how the sacrifice smokes on the reeking altar, and Mercy, for her humble mien, is scorned and drove away!

We gained a peat hut on the hillside, and from thence, rising early the next morning, saw troops of hurrying horsemen gallop with drawn swords into the city; heard guns fired; bells, which had clanged joyously for the Prince's entry, peal out false notes of welcome for Hanover; saw parties of fugitives stealing away by bye-paths, desolate at heart, scarce knowing whither they went; and heard the cannon from the Castle boom out what was from thence a sincere welcome to the Hanover Hog, who had, by the inscrutable decree of Providence, conquered men better, braver, nobler—for he was none of all these (only had brute courage) —than himself.

Let me be credited—'twas an awful time. Some have writ histories thereof; for me the bare mention makes my heart bleed; nor can I for very agony chronicle its horrors, feeling each one batter at my aching heart, which only the grave can soothe to forgetfulness. Nor shall the fame of the best chroniclers tempt me to transcribe the villainous deeds of the brute William

Duke of Cumberland. Suffice to relate the horrid truth that none of the Jacobites, save those who fled, escaped his murderous vengeance, which he called but letting rebellious blood. Women were killed, infants murdered, all the worst horrors chronicled by Comines repeated by this German boar, rooting in the fairest city of the kingdom.

Days passed. Parties of gore-imbued brutes scoured the country, inflicting nameless and horrid outrage on defenceless families, who were but suspected of having favoured the Prince. Of him I learnt, with thankfulness, that he had escaped. Yet every thought to spare from imminent personal peril centred on Kilmarnock.

Ailsie was like some Até or avenging fury from a far-off Greek age—heart and brain on fire with excitement. I often trembled lest the slight and temporary claim I had on her regard should fade into nothingness, and myself left without her protection—from its peculiar knowledge of the dangers of the city, an all-powerful one.

"Hoots, lassie," said she, one day, "'tisna for yeresel', but what wad Will think o' me gin I left his luve to cam intill hurt or harm?"

A miserable and fugitive life—hiding literally in holes and corners—we led while the inqui-

sition for blood, of the wretch Cumberland, held on its way. At length the tired troops, like savage dogs, demanded a cessation from duty, demanded to partake of the city's "pleasures," asked a song of the captives, welcome of the trembling and loathing citizens—most of whom, for their dear ones' sakes, conformed—as who would not?—to their conquerors' will, and professed a loud loyalty, which their hearts denied, to Hanover. Behold then—though isolated horrors were not scarce—drunken fury succeeded by hideous fraternity, agony, simulating friendship; men who would gladly have cut their guests' throats, banqueting and welcoming the Hanover wretches, to save their own.

With intense thankfulness, from time to time I heard of Stuart's narrow escapes; with bitter grief that Sergius was on his way to a state prison in London. Myself an outcast, either was as distant from me as the stars, which as we wandered often shone on our sleeping heads. I could not be induced into the city—Ailsie went often. Alas! must I pen it? She returned triumphant one night—she had attracted by her beauty the notice of the wretch, Cumberland.

"'Tis to serve him," she said wildly, "Will, that I talk wi' George Cumberland. I canna' ca' him Will, though 'tis his name. An', lass, if

ye luve him, 'tis not lamentin' my sins ye will be the day ; but if ye would see Willie Kilmarnock alive agen ye will com wi' me, for he is to be killed. Oh, my Will! had I as mony lives as stars shine on, a' should gae for ye. Ye but love this leddy, as 'tis fit ye should, an' was she a star ye sall see her face again if I can help ye to it."

"Dinna shrink," said she fiercely ; "I hae ye in my power ; a word, an' nae nook in the hills wad hide ye. Cam wi' me to Cumberland ; he is the wee German lairdie's son, wham they ca' king. He has your lover in ward. Will ye risk naething for him but useless sighs, idle tears, when by coming I can get frae George Cumberland an order for ye to see him? Dinna ye think me mad. 'Tis ye are mad to think a' men like Will. I tell ye George ance fou is but wax in my hands, he disna' luve ladies—they arena for him. I can get frae him what a Court fu' o' beauties like you couldna. Sae dinna fash ye wi' fear ; ye sall come as my cousin, to a dance where a' gang their ain gate, an' he's warst o' all—an' I rule him, an' he gies the ward to them. I will protect ye. Could I not, I wadna risk Will's curse by takin' ye. 'Tis but an hour spent in ill company—a sup o' whiskey, an' ye get the writ order that will open Will's

prison gatts to ye. Oh, wad he welcome me as he will the sight o' you, should I draw back for ony fear—for ony self-love? Oh, mem, pity him! 'Sick an' in prison.'"

This decided me. "Sick and in prison, and ye visited me not," rang in my ears as I followed Ailsie to her home—seeing once more the unaltered old mother spinning tranquilly, the clean cheerless rooms. For the first time for weeks I slept in a bed, sometimes slumbering like the dead, senseless, moveless—sometimes awaking with a start, as at sound of Sergius' voice calling me from a distance.

"I will come," I said each time, with a sob; "I will come, though I risk death—destruction."

All the next day I rested, the old woman grim and speechless, till Ailsie imparted her plan—then strongly agitated.

"Tell him," said she, clasping my hands, as the success of the wild scheme was assured, "tell him I send him my blessing, an' dinna ye or onybody believe Ailsie's clavers; 'twas brain fever set her on to say it. Puir lass! puir lass! sae handsome an' sae lost. But God is gude. He winna blame her; she is daft. I did my best to save her. God help us baith! Will knows that, an' pities us baith! He has a noble heart—my dear lord."

So, equipped by Ailsie, I went with her that night.

"Hush!" said Ailsie, as we hurried on through a close wynd, the air of which reeked with frightful odours, our steps sickening as they trod, our poor outworn senses of smell and hearing so nauseated that they could not feel more digust, but were numb and torpid. "Hush!" she said again, as I moaned, having for the hundredth time encountered a soul-sickening stench; "if ye gie oot where are we? Ye hae but this ae chance, and that for ye luved *him* sae weel. Eh, my bonnie bird wi' the gowd feathers, my beauty in silks and jools—where are yere luves noo?—the bonnie Prince, the big auld grazie-mon—an' him the prize o' the bunch! Oh, my grand, fine mon, my gude, clever ane, wha led them to success, till they thocht the wark their ain, and rejetit counsel. Where are ye? My God, if ye had loved me as ye did this fine beauty here, I wadna' suffered ye to be ta'en, though my life had paid for yours."

"I gie ye," she hissed, fiercely, "this chance, that should be my ain, for that I know in my soul I couldna hing together to see him dungeoned. My heart wad brak in thousand pieces—my life consume. Be gude to him, woman

that he luved—his days are done—yese meet him on airth nae mair, nae mair! Think o' that, Helen. Oh, for pity, for pity, haud me. I tellt ye I couldna live to see him; an', but I gae ye the gift, *he* would die forlorn o' baith, an' think him sel' forgot. Oh, why should I be forced to gie't awa' to ye, wha daur naught for him? Oh! heart, haud your purpose. Ye will tell him I sent you?"

"I cannot rob you, Ailsie," said I, in utter misery. "Oh, my God! You so afflicted, so oppressed—I will not."

"Helen," said she, sobbing wildly, "I tell ye I *couldna* live to see him in prison, in danger—I *could* not. See, woman, I but send ye, my messenger, to comfort him—to haud ye back wad hurt him, an' him I wad tear my heart out an' gie to. Oh, Helen! lass, Helen! if ye could feel my pain, my agony, at thocht o' him, ye couldna gae, and he wad be desolate. For him I go to nether hell. Be firm, woman; I hae a knife—hae ye yere poison?"

"Yes," said I, convulsively, nearly unconscious with misery, holding only to the one thought—the piteous appeal of Kilmarnock to see me, to take a last farewell—and I had but this slender chance.

Ailsie's thin feverish hands held mine in a

hard, close grip. "Watch yere chances, woman! Watch, I say—hae ye inkhorn, an' pen, an' paper?"

Assured of this, we went on, and, a few paces further, stopped before a dark archway, leading into a yet narrower wynd.

"Leave yere plaid here," she whispered, "nane will find it, an' 'tis like ye will escape by the thridd of a hair. Oh, Helen, lass, if he knew I led ye to danger, though to his comforting, he wad curse me, an' die despairin'. That will keep me firm. I wad ha' his thanks, his blessin'. Dinna fear the poison, woman, if ye need it. List! there is no poison on earth, or in hell, like shame. Gang till him pure, as when ye met him. Dead or livin', I wadna hae his curse."

We passed through the archway into a court, from the living hell of our emotions to a coarse glare of foulest earthly vice. "They assemble themselves by troops in the harlots' houses," was here literal. Hurrying knotsof Hanover soldiers were entering the well-lit large kitchen; troops of bedizened painted wretches welcomed them; loud laughter, the music of a clarionet, the shuffling of feet, the fumes of whiskey, dancing, singing, swearing—a horrible scene; yet feeling the poison, deadly and certain, in my pocket, a

fierce resolve braced my nerves, as a touch of electric fire.

Sergius was dying! I would risk death to see him once more.

Greeted and greeting, Ailsie, too, was transformed, her beautiful face rouged and reddened; yet the thin temples showed a certain doom, and the rapid feverous pulse of her hand scorched mine, which she held.

Known to be a favourite with the brutal Duke of Cumberland, none of the soldiers molested her, beyond a passing jest. The women, none envious of her protector, applied themselves to their dancing, singing, and drinking with their own friends. We won an inner room, nearly as large and equally well filled, and beyond that yet a smaller one, where, seated beside a flickering fire, with drink at hand, and a few lounging officers uneasily in attendance, sat the wretch on whose pleasure depended my success.

A broad face—every lineament the mark of some base ambition or low passion—I, at first, compared him to Blount; but, on my knees, I would beg the Colonel's forgiveness. This was a satyr of satyrs—a bloodthirsty brute, full of evil impulses. My face, made up and disguised, seemed not to take his attention, for which I thanked God. He, as well as the rest, looked

with approval on Ailsie, whose resplendent finery, beads and bangles, red silk and white arms, blazed out in the dull room, poppy-like.

"My cousin, sir," said she; "an whiles"—here she removed the whiskey archly and chucked up his broad chin—"ye arena fou, I winna say na to the bit writin' ye promist—for look ye, George, I am no' to be fooled to wait till ye *are* fou. Gie me a go-bye, and I gae by ye till anither. Mony a callant here would gie me a writ promise o' marriage."

"Nonsense," said he, "I'll gie no writins, Ailsie. I'm here to amuse me from the —— business of battle!"

"Then I'll gae till anither," said Ailsie, putting her arm about his neck. "Noo, George, business first; ye promised."

"What is it, my lord?" A thin man—ah, heavens! General Tremenheere—advanced, but seemed he had forgot me, for his eyes glanced at Ailsie, who was indeed a picture.

"Give me the pen," said Cumberland, not answering Tremenheere—whom he seemed to resent looking at Ailsie, or advising himself. "'Tis but a good-bye to your old sweetheart, Ailsie."

Ailsie sobbed.

"Here," said he sullenly, as she pushed him the paper, pen and ink, "see that this is the last

of such meddling; ye are but a ——, and times are bad when such are men's masters."

"Dinna ye misca' me," said Ailsie, as he signed his hideous sprawling name, adding to it some private mark. "Is this a' the write yese gie me?"

"'Tis an order to see him," said Cumberland, with some hauteur, "as I promised. Ask him if 'tis all right, if ye doubt me."

"Is it a' richt, General?" said Ailsie anxiously.

Tremenheere took it coldly, and examined it closely. "It is all right, madam," said he, at which the Duke swore at him in round terms for daring to doubt him.

"I always obey women first," shrugged Tremenheere, "after your example, sir, but not with your success." This and a dozen of kisses from Ailsie, together with a glass of whiskey which they shared, brought him into a better mood.

"Tak' ye care on't, cousin," she said to me "or if George an' me fa' out he will e'en want it again. Sir," to Tremenheere, "take ye my cousin, she isna sae demure as she seems."

"No, for shame, General," said an ill-looking officer, lounging up and looking in my face, "this girl is mine. Ailsie, ye brought her for me?"

"Ye lie!" said Ailsie. "Tak' her, General—age before honesty. Ye go intill the sluns, ye ——, an' seek for yersel'."

"That's right, Ailsie," said Cumberland, fatuously, stroking her hair. "You are the girl. If I'm a bit cross, forgive me. Let's move away these curst business-looking things—I've signed so many deaths that I'm about full up of signing." He flung the ink and pen into the fire.

"Some whiskey, Jessie?" said Ailsie, giving me his glass. Seeing I could not touch it, she poured me out another, a little of which I drank.

I felt for the poison in my pocket, and a murderous longing to place it in Cumberland's whiskey curdled about my heart. I would have done it, too, had we been alone, and stamped on him, fiend-like, in his agonies, in revenge for the base cruelties he had come from, red-handed.

"Looks a fury, your cousin," said he, rousing me from my dangerous reverie. "Carries a knife, I'll swear!"

"Tak' yer aith on it. Jess is just a fury," laughed Ailsie. "Tak' her off, General, she's jealous—she swears she'll ha' George here by hook or by crook. Ah! but he's my callant, lassie!"

Afraid to speak, lest Tremenheere should remark my voice, I hummed a Hanover song. Jessie struck into it in a high-pitched voice. Some others in the room took it up, and the chorus was stamped out by the rest, infected by the noise. Business would now have been impossible. Irruptions from the next room, fresh arrivals, dancing, singing, Jacobite songs, Hanover songs—loyal, treasonable—shouting, yelling, stamping, fighting, reconcilements—a hideous discord, through all which Ailsie plied the brute Cumberland with flattery and drink, and I led the General, thawing and a little gratified, into the next room, joining in a Bacchic orgie of dancing there, and so through to the outer one.

"Hallo!" said he, "what's this for?"

"To be alain wi' ye," said I boldly. "I am na sae wild as all here, though I doubtna wild eneuch. Get me a drink—so."

I took the glass; a fresh lot bustled by us, half drunk.

"I left my plaid yon," said I; "will ye gang oot wi' me, or it will be stole?"

"Ye shall have another," said he, his arm about my waist, as we strolled out into the half-lit courtyard, "ye are a handsome woman."

By this we were alone. Behind us the lighted

hall, which to me typified hell; before me freedom—but not yet; a word, and twenty hands had seized and borne me back, the paper torn from me. Above us shone the starry sky. Oh, how remote is heaven from hell! Would it were nearer, more merciful, less unpitying!

"Kiss me," said the General.

My resolve was taken. I could escape by flight, raising an uproar; perhaps met, probably pursued; Ailsie suspected or blamed. I resolved to appeal to Tremenheere, yet doubted him, and seized my plaid—to fly should he refuse to listen, to believe me.

"Ye see," said I, "that is it, sir. I am handsome, which is why I wadna stay yon. Wi' you alane I am safe."

"From all but me," said he, holding me tight.

"Yes," said I, "and you I do not fear. You are an old friend."

"Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed, "perhaps a kinsman?"

"And a kinsman, if Fernie's marriage to Lord Clifford make you one. I am Lady Burleigh, Helen Rohan—we met at the Manor."

"My God! said he, loosing his hold. "It cannot be!"

"It is. Oh, General, I am on my knees to

you, and I—I might be Fernie, whom I aided."

"Fly!" said he, wildly. "That man in there would stab you if he but knew. So loathsome a wretch as he is scarce exists on the earth. Yet I will see you safe away from here—the city is dangerous. This den—a hyena's lair could not be fouler—and you in it! You! 'Tis a hideous dream! How, in heaven's name, came you to risk this? 'Twas suicidal."

"'Twas for that paper; but I am safe—I have poison with me. Now farewell!"

"I must see you home."

"I have no home," said I forlornly. "I shelter with Ailsie in different lairs on Arthur's Seat; we are safe there. Do not betray us."

"I will not." The hard and cynical face softened. "Share my quarters, Lady Clifford. In all honour as to my own daughter, 'tis offered. None need know you are not Fernie. For God's sake take the offer!"

"Thank you," said I. "'Tis not doubting you that I refuse. I cannot be content; to-night or to-morrow I leave, and meantime am in no danger, once away from here."

He hurried me through the archway, and, taking my hand, sped on—through the foul smells, the silence, the starlit darkness.

"I will protect you," said he, through his teeth, "in spite of yourself; nay, do not resist, or worse will come of it. On Arthur's Seat, with soldiers everywhere! Good God! and here! You are stark mad. If you will not come quietly to my quarters I will whistle a guard round us—'tis but a laugh at the old General, a sneer from the young rakes, a foul construction from the beast Cumberland, who is too foul for hell itself. I am on honour to you, may I perish eternally else. You trust me?"

"Yes," said I, resignedly, not afraid of him, but seeing more difficulties through this safe-guarding; "but what of Ailsie?"

"You can give me a note to her," he suggested; "but hurry on, the streets are evidently unsafe. As for Arthur's Seat, I shudder; you have escaped by a miracle."

We hurried on—on, into the new town. He entered a neat house, remarking—

"I always get billeted. Barracks for the juniors, the young fools who like noise. I have half this house—one room for an aide. He will be on duty to-night, and a sentry also; rather better for you than Arthur's Seat. Ugh! I shudder, I cannot help it. Come in."

Into a narrow unlit passage, up a flight of twisting stairs, with a door top and bottom,

through a sitting-room, dimly lit by a couple of flaring candles; a tired aide-de-camp seated, his head on the table, asleep; a whiskey bottle and two glasses.

"Come through to my dressing-room," said he, and, lighting a candle, preceded me. "Lady Clifford"—he closed both doors—"strange as our meeting was, you may rely on honourable care and efficient protection from me. I pledge my word, my honour to you. If I fail may God visit it on me, to the uttermost!"

"Surely, General Tremenheere," said I, "I trust you."

He drew a large arm-chair into the room, a rug, and a blanket off the bed, his pillow—and bidding me make myself as much at ease as Fernie would, prepared to go.

"Do not say I am here to Ailsie," I suggested, alarmed lest her wild notions might lead to her coming, and to draw notice on me.

He smiled grimly.

"Helen Rohan, I am old enough to need very little counsel, believe me. My honour is pledged to protect you. What would it be worth if I told Cumberland, through her, that you were here?"

"She would not betray me wilfully," said I; "so as she has been so good to me, ease her mind on my account."

He promised, and withdrew, to return as I guessed to the villainous revelry in the wynd—not for its sake, but that Cumberland, with whom he had some influence, should not resent his going.

I sank into the arm-chair, not fatigued, strung up to a sleeplessness that seemed to mock at rest; the wild and infamous scene, from which I had but by chance escaped; the death I had braved; Ailsie's wild devotion to Kilmarnock, which had induced her to propose, and I to accede to the wilder scheme of seeing him. Sergius in danger—doomed! The thought cut like a sharp knife, and I yet—yet, with this order which would gain me admittance to him—so many hundred miles away. I fingered the poison in my pocket. Were it not best to take it and be done with life, to let all these agonies, which were too heavy to endure, slide by; to know that I but preceded him into nothingness by a few hours; to endure no more the bitter stabs of memory, of consciousness? Hours passed. I took out the little packet, wondering whether to mix it with water. I replaced it, and fell asleep, so gradually that, when dreams began to replace the vividness and agony of waking thoughts, I knew not.

In the morning I heard the General astir

early. He lit a fire and made coffee, knocking at my door to offer some. I rose reluctantly. Another day of misery alone presented itself; another day when I should writhe at heart to learn of slaughterings of loyal clansmen, of butchery of harmless citizens. My orisons were soon said. I knelt and invoked bitter curses on Hanover, trebly bitter on Cumberland. It was childish, futile, to think my feeble voice would reach to where Mercy sat veiled, and Justice deaf. Yet having drearily smiled at this thought, I again compelled myself on my knees, repeating them gravely, and arose a little comforted.

"Would Ailsie but stab him," thought I, opening the door to the General, who brought his own coffee in that we might talk over its consumption.

"I will call you Fernie," said he, "at once for safety and brevity. Have you any plan, Lady Clifford?" This he said gravely, forgetting so soon his own proposal.

"To get to London," I said. "There I must get, how I know not, though I have money."

"There is a despatch going," said he, "could you ride so far. I know the young officer who bears it—an excellent man—and he will be attended. No remark could be make if you met him without the city. He goes to-night."

"I can but ride pillion, sir."

"That is a pity," said he; "'tis, I fear, too slow for his movement."

"Oh!" said I, "I will ride. I would mount a camel and hold on by sheer force of will. Let me go, sir, with this escort; I have no courage to travel alone."

"Do not weep," said he, "you shall go."

"What did Ailsie say?" Languidly I dried my tears, indifferent now to any appearance of folly or weakness.

"I satisfied her," said he; "told her you met an old friend, a cousin, and went with her; told her you sent her a message, that you now needed no poison—that reassured her. She was, besides, quarrelling with Cumberland, and at length went off with him."

I hid my face in my hands, so awful seemed the fact that now such things were common talk to me.

"Forgive me!" said the General; "in wartime one cannot be justly blamed for so forgetting one's speech."

"Who is this despatch-bearer?" I asked anxiously.

"Major Sunderland, of the Black Watch. I know him well; rely on kindness and respect from my introduction no less than his own good-

ness. Shall you be rested enough by to-night? I will drive you to meet him on the London Road."

In the course of the day, when the hurry and excitement of the dreary search-parties was relaxing—when even Hanover soldiers began to weary of hunting fugitives from one hiding-place to another, and to look forward to the coarse revelry of a night of rioting and excess—in the dim twilight, Ailsie came in, staggering up the narrow stairs, followed by Tremenheere.

"I will see the richts o't," she was saying, "the richts o't. She wasna joost ane o' us, wha can tak' care o' oorsel's, an' ye may ha' lost her amang the camps; if so, General or no, I will to the Duke an' denounce ye for a murderer. Where is she?"

"I am here." I came from the inner room and drew her in.

"Oh, Helen," said she, sobbing in extremity of excitement, "ye are there, woman; I was afraid wi' a horrible dread after ye went, lest ye were strayed awa' an' taken in some snare, an' me no' by to help ye wi' knife an' voice. Are ye ganging, lass, to London—to him?"

"Yes," said I, "to-night, Ailsie, with a guard. The General has been only too good to me. I mean to tell him in his prison how good you

were; but, Ailsie, girl, is there risk of your talking of it to his hurt—ye know how proud he is?"

"I ken," said she. "No, I canna talk o' him to maist, 'twould choke me to name him to his enemies—that is safe, Helen, my silence, as the grave where I am going, as fast as he—as fast as he. Tell him I sent ye, an' I feel he will bless me for it."

I held out my hand for farewell—she slipped some gold into it. For a moment I held it, burning, contaminating, in pity to her; the next, in utter loathing, let it fall to the floor.

"It isna the 'Butcher's,'" said she, with a bitter sob, stooping for it, meaning the Duke, "it isna his. I found it, Helen—a lost purse, in the wynd."

"I have plenty," said I, as calmly as I could. "I will leave you some, Ailsie."

"Dinna," said she, shaking the tear-drops from her long eyelashes. "Can refined gold stop a heart from bursting—stop death coming on? God speed ye, dear; gie him a' the comfort ye can, ne'er mind what ithers say. The lave o' thae straightlaced folk will be in in hell, suner than Ailsie. Folk wha tithe the mint an' weigh the rue, an' forget to luve their fellow-creatures. Gude be wi' ye, dear. It is a

weight off my mind that ye are safe—a bitter agony frae death, that he will bless me for your comin' to his dreary prison; for he loves ye, Helen, better than life, stronger than death. Farewell!"

I stooped and kissed her, conscious that the General was shocked, thinking only of her devotion, of her goodness to me; and, taking off a chain I wore, slipped it on her neck.

"Keep this," said I, "for my sake. I will tell him of you; in better times you shall be my care, Ailsie."

With a scream of unsuppressed anguish, she fled down the narrow stairs out into the gathering darkness, and I saw her no more, for ever!

"Now," said the General briskly, "she is satisfied. She would take no word of mine, and had I not been able to show you safe, might have done me some damage with her dear friend the Butcher, whose present fancy she is. Faugh! kissing her, Lady Clifford!"

"She has been good to me, sir; beyond what any good woman would have been, or attempted."

"Pardon me! I believe she would have risked her life for you. I should not have spoken; yet, that apart, I did not like it. Now

to business. By nine we must be at our meeting-place. I will now leave you to get ready. If you go unprovided, you have yourself to blame. I can send and buy anything you may need—write a list. I am sending an extra valise of my own for you, and one of my own servants, with special orders to attend to you. If you see Fernie, give her my love. Tell her the old father is well as ever. You were very good to her, Lady Clifford."

"Not very," say I, with a twinge of conscience. "Not so good as you are to me."

"Ah, well," said he, "you have a sweet face, and I'll swear was not bad to her. Besides, I have better evidence—her own—that you helped, advised, and consoled her. So, my dear, take my thanks."

An hour after we were driving through the startled and terrified streets of the twice conquered city. Some houses were shut up—the habitants either fled or dead; some smug and brisk, with an hypocrite look about them of rejoicing; most seemed dreary and empty of comfort, anxious faces appearing at the windows as our carriage rattled through, and retiring as hastily at sight of the dreaded and hated Hanover uniform of the soldier who sat beside the coachman on the box.

"Helen Rohan," said he, as we long passed the place where I judged we might meet the despatch-bearer, "what would you say to my having got a week's leave from the Butcher, leaving Blount, who is now Lieutenant-General, in charge?"

"Is it so, sir?"

"Yes. He proposed it himself. Says the despatches want supplementing to the King—truly wants to rid himself of me awhile. I am a clog on his orgies, he hates my watching him, Blount is more to his mind and taste. I should like to see those two to-night."

"Will you come all the way?"

"Yes."

"I am very thankful."

"So am I," said he, grimly. "Blood and battle get less and less liking from me, and yon brute we are leaving behind is no commander. Thank heaven for his vices, but for which the city would be even worse off, for all the time he now gives to duty is so much added to the slaughter-list, whereas his orgies harm only himself." By this a clattering escort had joined us, whom I could not see for the darkness.

"We are safe and snug," said the General. "I am only sorry for the wretched people left be-

hind, under the kind control of the 'Butcher' and Blount."

"Blount is not so bad," I say hopefully.

"My dear Lady Clifford, you don't know him, or have not seen him in congenial company. He has roughened and coarsened since the loss of Fernie : that marriage might have redeemed him, for he truly loved her. Yet, on the whole, Clifford is better for her, though bad is the best."

Speaking thus resignedly of the settlement of his only daughter, I felt sorry for him : his chill and cynical aspect was accounted for by a cheerless and loveless life. A long silence fell on us as we were borne swiftly onward, broken only by the noise of the escort's jangling swords. I thought of the swift transitions of life, of last night, of this journey.

After some hours, we stopped to bait at a hostelry.

"We had better alight," said he, "it will stretch our limbs from the cramp of so long sitting." And, summoning a woman to attend me, he went into the parlour, and ordered wine for himself and spirit for the escort, who gladly dismounted for a rest.

The woman took me to a wofully-forlorn bedroom, and wept, poor wretch! when I looked around it in dismay.

"'Tisna fit for ye, mem, but 'tis the best noo. We hae had two masters of late, and I say God bless Prince Charlie, who med his men behave, an' pay for a' they had. They Hanover hogs—though it isna safe to say sae, an' you ane o' them, an' yere father anither—ne'er pay scot or lot, an' we're nigh ruint. Dinna mind me, mem, 'twas o' the cause I spak', not of the quality, wha I hear are as drove as we puir folk, to do as they do; but, mem, I hae a white cockade Prince Charlie's sel' gae me as they passed to victory; an' God bless him! I wadna say sae muckle to aebody. Here, mem, is water to wash, an' rest ye on the bed till I bring ye some tea. Bonnie Prince Charlie's verra sel' slept in this room, an' differ' it was then. Here, mem, is the cockade his ain han' gae me."

"Ah!" said I, longing to kiss it, yet restrained for fear of a trap, set by this voluble hostess. Yet no, tears stood in her eyes in earnest of her sincerity, as, leaving the ribbon in my hand, she went to get a dish of tea. I kissed the little relic with a swelling heart. What centuries now divided us. I threw myself on the bed, and imagined him cursing its shortness, its lumpiness, and comparing it unfavourably with a couch of heather. Where was he now? Anguish half choked me as I drank the hot tea,

and listened to the woman's praises of him, and, Hanover hog as she had called me, gave her a piece of gold, ere I went, in payment of her fealty to my darling wandering alone, afar, desolate.

"Lend me," said I, with a yearning for it I could not repress, "lend me this white ribbon, it will be, assure yourself, in good hands."

"Tak it then, mem, an' God bless you. Sure no Hanover could look sae sweet and gracious, but, mem, 'tis but loanin' it, I wad be till ye, I canna gie it, let me ne'er see ye again—or it again, 'twill be mine, lent ye, for his sake, I canna gie't awa'.

"Lend it then," said I, "and it is still yours, doubly so that you prize it."

"Atweel," she said, satisfied, "ye ken, mem, I dinna grudge it ye for a loanin'."

Rejoiced to have it on any terms, I pinned it recklessly on my dress, beneath my pelisse over my heart. "Oh! my darling," thought I, "here are too wretches constant to you under the stars, and perchance thousands more, whose love lies concealed as this ribbon in their dearest hearts." I bade her farewell again with thanks for her kindness.

On resuming our road, General Tremenheere bade me, when I felt inclined to sleep, tell him,

and he would manage to find room beside the coachman; in effect he presently went thither, though I could see the arrangement was an uncomfortable one for all, which, though it did not disturb my dreams, which wandered far enough from the present, resolved, me on my awaking, to beg him not so to discommode himself again.

"I am, for the time, your daughter, sir," said I, "and sure you would not get out for Fernie."

Thanking me for this trust in him, he slept while I looked out over the autumnal-leaf-strewn roads, at the hurrying white clouds, at the crowding stars, and felt the white ribbon to be a mute and fateful message from my lost love, who was perhaps consoled himself by some relic of mine. "It must be so," I sobbed in my corner of the carriage. It is not chance brought this to me, it was sent by his spirit to mine."

The General was tranquilly sleeping—the hard lines of his face lightened, repose on his thin lips, rest on his weary world-worn eyes. "So he will look when he is dead," thought I, "and forgiven—for everyone in the whole world will be forgiven after death—but the beast Cumberland! He has committed the sin without pardon, striking the bound captive, torturing the loyal heart, quenching the spirit." A wave of hate swept over me at thought of him.

"Why," thought I, "having poison, did you, so coward-like, not stop this terrestrial demon in full career, as men would stop a mastiff reeking with blood and madness?

"I wish I had, I truly wish it"—my teeth ground together—the chance I had missed of extinguishing his hated and hateful life, by poison, by the knife, weighed on me. For the first time, Jael appeared to me heroic—her hammer and nails, her treachery, all justified. Sisera, though he could not have been like this beast, might have borne some faint, far-off resemblance to him in her eyes. "God help them!" I thought of the Jacobites. "Will not one, as I ought to have done, sacrifice himself for the rest?" Thought of my cowardice haunted me, I writhed in spirit at the lost chance, fierce as a tigress, lamenting that I had not taken this sin, if sin it were, upon my soul, and released others from bondage to this foul demon.

The General awoke.

"I feel refreshed," said he. "Very little sleep serves me. You are uneasy Lady Clifford, tell me what your distress is, if I can remedy it."

"I am afraid not, sir. My distress, which is acute, is that, being within striking distance, I did not bury a knife to the hilt in Cumberland's heart."

"No, no!" said he, "do not say so, my dear girl. This beautiful soft hand was not meant for such avenging. Leave men to fight or suffer, since war and pain must be. We want no English Judiths—no English Jaels! Englishmen will, eventually, do justice; a revolution, a rebellion, should weigh its chances of suffering beforehand, nor rashly hope that all will go well with it if it fail."

"He exercised no such atrocities, sir. Nor have we Englishmen now to trust to. This man is a brutal German; a bad specimen of a coarse, uncivilised, half-savage nation. Why should he raven on English lives and liberties?"

"Leave such thoughts, my dear," said he, taking my hand. "They but distress you, and do no good. I am practical, and, sorry as I am that evil exists, we must go for practical remedies. Assassination of this or that man is eminently unsafe, and, as a policy, unsuccessful."

He lit a carriage-lamp, and began to sort and arrange some letters and papers.

"Here," said he, "while I think of it, is my card to Thomas Pelham, the Premier—you will have heard of him. I know him well. Poor Tom Pelham! he is not quite such a fool as enemies assert, and his brother is a very clever man who manages a good deal for him. If as

you aim to see Kilmarnock, you must not go wildly to work with a knife and a dark lantern. He is very strictly kept, we fear his great ability. The fascination of his presence wins over or disarms enemies, and you cannot justly expect our party to accord much indulgence to so successful a rebel."

"Rebel!" I muttered. "We owe no loyalty to German pigs!"

"Very well, very well, Lady Clifford! very well indeed to me, but Thomas Pelham, whose greatest fear is catching cold, could not risk his office-blanket by listening to such speeches. Now, my dear child, be reasonable and listen. If you have occasion to go to Tom Pelham, be very mild, and silly if possible as a sheep. He has old-world ideas of women, derived possibly from his mother, who must have been an arrant fool to trouble herself to rear up so idiot a cub. He will assume you some foolish woman, anxious for a souvenir of the handsome prisoner, and mentally put himself in the same case, for though no woman worth a penny would marry such a bread-poultice as he, he has no mean idea of his own attractions. Let him think you womanly—as he interprets the word—that is, as soft and silky as a gloss of silk—and you will get your suit. Let him suspect that you are clever—he

has a mortal fear of clever folk—he will harden like mud in a tropical sun. Here, however, is the introduction. Beware of the brother, the real Sir Oracle. He is, if you like, as clever as they are made, not at all inclined to assist even as beautiful a Jacobite as you, my dear."

He wrote in pencil a few lines on the card, signed it, and handed it to me folded in an addressed cover. I slipped it into my bosom beside the order from Cumberland.

"Have you sufficient money?" said he. "If not, I will advance you some."

"I have enough," said I, "and have, besides, Verney Clifford's town address."

"You must not go to him," said he, "openly. Best go to my aunt, Lady Farringdon, in Mayfair, there you may meet him. She lives in Curzon Street and is a good old soul. Fernie has been her care for years; tell her I sent you 'twill be enough—yet a writing is always best." He wrote the introduction needed and gave it me. "When you have seen Kilmarnock," said he, "though I own it seems to me unnecessary, you had better go quietly down to the Manor. Fernie is there, and so complete is our victory no harshness will be extended to the helpless women of the Jacobite party. Stay with her till the storm is over. Then, being at more

leisure, any business service I can render to you I will willingly do."

I thanked him dully.

"When you have seen Kilmarnock," rang in my ears. My God! When I had seen him—powerless to help him as I was, business would have but little interest for me—life itself; and even the seeing him to be a matter of favour! How intensely I hated the Hanover man at that moment—the swine who held this priceless pearl of mind, of courage, of intellect, beneath his hoof.

All the curses of a bitter commination passed unspoken through my mind. I wished madness on this family, and blindness. I wished that each might torment the other—the son the father, and by their vices and mean avarice tire out the fool English who upheld them. I leaned back half-fainting—with this unspoken fury of hate—yet have never since repented it, and hope it may come true.

"You naturally feel much for him as the Prince's friend?" said the General, curiously.

"As my own," I gasped. "Oh, to think of him in their power, and to bend powerless to brutality and injustice!"

"I must remind you," said he, something sternly, "that it is fortune of war. He will not

be treated brutally, but have fair trial, Lady Clifford, by his peers."

I moaned—silenced, yet unconvinced.

The General took my hand.

"My dear," said he, "I sympathise with you deeply, but to excite yourself to madness would do him no good, and to let imagination stray in conjectures of dire tortures, which he will not be called on to suffer, is to hurt yourself to no cause."

No incidents beyond baiting the horses or changing for relays occurred on our further journey. The General was very kind and thoughtful. Dulled and stunned by the weary mental pressure, my brain seemed inert to take in the size or tremendous life of London when we at last reached it.

"You must not think," said the General kindly, "or you will not be able to act, so many emotions will kill you. I will take you to Lady Farringdon, and desire her that she will let you alone."

Our arrival was in the evening, and, true to his promise, the General proceeded with me to Mayfair.

Lady Farringdon was an old woman, who seemed to exist in an eternal protest against young women; yet she was kind, and, if a cold

and chilling apathy to all outward life could not ensure me the secret sympathy of age as being in some degree like itself, it was yet no bar to her active help. She neither questioned nor bothered me—was civil, stately, and cold, and bid me come or go at my own convenience from her house.

"Times are too unsettled for formality," said she, "and the General tells me you have much private business on hand. So I desire, my dear, that you do not harass yourself with our household arrangements. I will set apart a man and a maidservant to wait on you."

I thanked her more warmly for this liberty of action which, in any case, I must have claimed, than for any other of the privileges of a guest, and retired to my rooms to brood over my next move. Time was flying. Kilmarnock's trial was fixed for the next week, and associated with him would be Balmerino and Cromartie.

"Poor old Balmerino!" I sighed as I thought of him; then, going down to dinner with the old lady and the General, asked her abruptly how I could most quickly renew my clothing—worn-out, fine, and half-dirty as it was—ere I went to the Duke of Newcastle with my petition.

"My dear," said she, "if any of Lady Verney's

clothes fit you, take them and welcome; if not, my own woman and mantua-maker will quickly make some for you."

"That I would prefer," said I, scorning Fernie's barrack-looking gear, which was, besides, for I had inspected it, half outworn and not overclean.

The two women came, measured, talked, cut, fitted, and went, came again, engaged a couple of industrious sewing-maids, and I was soon as presentable as a pink after a shower.

"I will take you to the Minister's levée," said Lady Farringdon. "Tom Pelham is my godson."

"Then," said the General, with a bow, "he is to be congratulated on his mother; but where, in Fortune, Dolly, did you pick up the deity?"

"For shame!" said she smiling, "you know better than that. Better informed than the most part, eh? Yet I cannot, for my life, eh, was it Vishnu?"

Two days of ice-clad volcanic inaction—the burning unrest driven down, hidden in surface-stupor; dreams banished by a nightly dose of narcotic, for a vivid dream just then would have incapacitated me for action—and we were fairly in the coach. The General had long since presented his despatches, yet came with us.

"You will be Lady Verney," he whispered,

"keep your fan well before your face, your hood forward. I possessed Tom with my daughter's desire to see the State prisoners."

"That would not do," said his aunt, "a Clifford, be she never so loyal, would be suspected in that connection. Therefore, Lady Clifford had best pass as Nell Chetwynd—my niece, my dear—and so allay his Grace's suspicions."

"Ay," said Tremenheere, "it would be perhaps better so:"

"Newcastle has not seen Lady Eleanor for years," went on Lady Farringdon, "nor is likely to; and he is too busy a man to trouble himself with difficult identifications, even should they meet. To him one girl is the same as another."

"As with all wise men," said the General; "directly they begin to differentiate, to endow with souls or minds or reasoning powers these charming soap-bubbles of nature, they get into a muddle, and are, like Frankenstein, pursued by the monster they have created."

"Really," said Lady Farringdon, in a tone of cold disapproval, "do you talk of children like that?"

"I was not talking of them at all," said he, "mine was an abstract proposition. But, with regard to the Tower, I told, as I mentioned to

you, that my daughter wished to see the prisoner, whereas poor Fernie would scarce venture for her life near the Tower, especially if she knew lions were there."

We went into a large anteroom, where were various suitors, all so feverishly possessed with suits important to themselves as to spare very little notice for our knot of quiet folk; and I, perishing with dread lest this high-placed Minister should, for caprice or on advice, refuse what he might well regard as an idle boon—a gratuitous insult to the fallen Statesman—to be made the mock of an idle woman's curiosity—did not even notice them. After some time, other suitors being disposed of, we went in.

"Shut the door, Tremenheere," were the first words greeting us. "You know my predisposition to cold. Inherited, sir—no fault of mine—inherited. Now, how can I serve Lady Dorothy Farringdon?"

"Your godmother, sir!" said she laughing.

"Yes, exactly. I have not forgot you—will give me pleasure to please you."

"Well, your Grace," said she, "we having heard so much of them, want to see the lions in the Tower—my niece and I—Eleanor Chetwynd, sir; you remember her?"

"Yes, oh yes; saw her twelve years ago—a

little girl then. So, Lady Eleanor, you are anxious to see a real live lion, eh? stuffed with straw, eh?"

"That, and the—the men," I whispered, half whimpering with rage at thought of this man having power to grant or refuse a boon I valued as my life.

"Who does she mean?" said his Grace to the General, "the Jacobites? Eh! 'pon my soul, this is early days, milady. Is it the handsome one, Kilmarnock; or the clever one, Cromartie; or the old fellow, Balmerino? We have several sort of lions, you see."

"We must see them all, with your Grace's good leave," said Lady Farringdon.

"Ah, well, I suppose you must. The trial once on, you could see 'em at the Hall—a much prettier sight. The Hall will be hung with red; I will get you a ticket. 'Fore heaven! Nell Chetwynd has grown a handsome woman. Put down your fan, my dear. If you go to peep at them, the Jacobites ought, in fairness, to get a peep at you. Will not though, if you are so shy."

He wrote the order for admission indifferently.

"I daresay the poor devils will be glad to see someone of family," said he. "General, you might go, and, in the course of conversation, get hold of some of their secrets—eh?"

"A very good thought," said Tremenheere, impassively; "no one but you would have thought of, sir."

"Eh, I have my lucid moments," said he with dignity, "though I am considered a lunatic by some. I should like to know, else, how this rebellion came to so speedy an end."

"Exactly, sir." The General listened, as he plunged into a discussion which passed by us like the wind—so deadly faint and sick was I in my eagerness to be off, to put this paper charm to proof. Once away, Lady Farringdon declined coming—her nerves, she said, could not bear the roaring of the lions, or the sight of the prisoners. The General came with me. It was rather late to be going; yet, getting a chair for his aunt, and sending one footman with her, we went on, leaving the chariot in the city, with orders to return home.

How we got in, I being insensible to outward impressions, cannot say, save that as we passed Traitors' Gate, against which the summer tide was idly lapping, I stopped for a moment while the General pointed out the stairs on which Elizabeth of England had thrown herself, tired and outworn, when entering as a prisoner.

"Would she were living now," thought I, "then were Kilmarnock safe." Yet on the whole the

idea of his being a favourite of the talented monarch was distasteful to me. So crossing the courtyard, we stopped at a round tower of stern grey masonry. I quaked as the door was unlocked, the deputy-governor preceding us up the narrow winding stairs.

"All their cells open into a common apartment," he said indifferently. He seemed a dull fop, and to entertain a proper and supercilious contempt for unsuccessful Jacobites, and waiting until we had entered locked us in.

At first—in the gloom, coming in from the dazzling summer light—I could see no one. Then could just make out the faces of Lords Balmerino and Cromartie, both of whom I knew, and was sorry for.

"They know me," I whispered to Tremenheere.

"No matter," said he, "we must adhere to our statement here, whether recognised or not; 'twill not do to implicate them."

Balmerino looked at me, his brave stately head unbowed by suffering. Cromartie also stared, but him I scarce knew.

I advanced to Lord Balmerino.

"I have met your lordship," said I. "Now I am one Eleanor Chetwynd—you may remember 'twas not ever so."

"I will remember Eleanor Chetwynd," said he, taking my hand, "for so long as it is your pleasure."

Cromartie rose and bowed; he looked dull, and was evidently suffering tortures of mental distress. I mentioned General Tremenheere's name, whispering to Balmerino that I had brought him as escort only, and this I whispered behind my fan, so that our two faces were hid for a moment. The next, when I looked up, I saw a curious pair of eyes trying to look through the fan, belonging to a tall slender man standing at the door of one of the cells which opened on to the sitting-room—a wretched, round dungeon of a place.

"There is Kilmarnock," said Balmerino.

"My visit is to him," said I; "beseech your lordship's best construction, I am going into his room"—and Balmerino smiling, I went forward, past or through the tall figure, I scarce know which, save that it followed me, and we were alone.

I placed my fan, shut, on the table, and held out both my hands.

"Do not waste time," said I, "in staring. Oh, Sergius! it is I truly. Oh, my dear!" and, held in his arms, I could for awhile say no more.

"Are you glad of my coming?" No need of words in that crushing embrace answering me.

"Helen," said he, "thank God! I again believe in Him. Oh! my sweet dream-friend, my angel! So you had not forgot me, as I imaged falsely!"

"Never dare image such a thing again. How could you? Here, dear Sergius, keep this ring. I kissed it ten thousand times, that when you want a true, real kiss, you might get it. Ten thousand thoughts of you go with it—thoughts of years."

"I will have the kisses from your lips," said he, pocketing the ring, "while I can, Helen. Oh, my God is it possible! to die and leave you behind! Ah! Helen! Helen! Was it well done to come and renew the old agony of longing for you? Yes, yes, a million times yes!"

"You are changed," said I, stroking his thin face; but, Sergius, you are happier than I, this is my brightest moment for an eternity of suffering of apprehension about you. When you think of me——"

"Which is ever and at all times, sweet!"

"Remember I am thinking of you, and try to be as happy as you can, dear, for misery of yours comes through the darkness to me. Do you play cards?"

"Sometimes, my darling."

"Well, dear, leave kissing. Do you remember the Tennis Court?"

"Helen, be quiet."

"I am quiet enough. Sergius, have I been cruel to you?"

"Tolerably," said he, half-sullenly.

"I have not, sir."

"No, sweet, I did not mean it; for a minute I thought myself free, but there is no time for bickerings, which are honey-sweet in themselves. I love you, Helen—love you. Do you believe me now? Love you—so much that if—ah! Helen! say once that you love me. We are alone perhaps for the last time on earth. Say you love me, never to unsay it again. Say it, dearest, sweetest."

"I love you," I said, "and would give my life for you, forgive me if ever I grieved or hurt you; I tried to be just, to make you reasonable. Shall we talk now of other things?"

"No," said he passionately, "I am mad as an Indian idolater, who utters his god's name so many million times. Love, love, love, love, love. It is so sweet to have you to myself, though in this heartrending way; kiss me again, dear. Here write 'I love you' on this paper. It will be a talisman on my trial; I shall feel it

in my breast, and recall a thousand times that it is true."

I wrote it, blotting it with a tear, and, folding, slipped it inside his coat.

"I must tell you," said I after a silence, "I am supposed to be your niece Eleanor Chetwynd, so be prepared."

"All right," said he. "Will you come again?"

"If I can—if you will let me."

"Helen, do not tease, time is too precious. Come, and, when you do not come, write—not at length, but sweet and precious scrolls like this one. Put on one, 'Ten thousand kisses,' on another, 'My own Sergius,' and so on, and always, 'Helen,' mind that. They will always cure some heartache."

"Sergius," said I, feeling his heart throb heavily, "if I could give my life for yours I would, and tens of thousands would do the same; but, dear, there is a better life. We will meet there and be happy."

"Helen," said he, and the crushing clasp of his arms assured me we were best alone, "I am happy now, in unspeakable content. I saw Balmerino speaking to you."

"The brave old man!" said I. "He laughed when I confessed my visit was to you."

"I saw two heads very close behind your fan,"

he smiled, and wondered, though my heart beat to suffocation. "I might have known who was there."

"I have," said I, "brought a message from an Edinburgh girl, Ailsie Fraser, who helped me a great deal to this interview; she desired me to tell you that you might at least think kindly of her." He smiled.

"Poor girl!" said he, "I am unable to think of her at all, in any way. Well, yes. Tell her I thought kindly of her, and thank her for any service rendered for me to you, though I need not tell you her claim on my regard is utter delusion. I once rescued her from ill-treatment, on my soul that is all. Her gratitude even is repulsive to me. Now leave talking of her for ever. Where are you staying, sweet?"

"With Lady Farringdon and General Tremenheere. I came with him from Edinburgh. This morning we got an order from Tom Pelham, to see the lions, and casually included you. It nearly broke my heart even to seem indifferent. I could have killed Tom Pelham, the old idiot. He does not suspect who I am."

"I am in charity with all the world," said he. "Now you are here, even this cell is beautiful."

"Shall we join the others?" said I.

"Yes," said he, without offering to move or to release me, "presently. They will know we have much to talk of. Cromartie, it is doubtful if he notices anything; old Bal is my friend, dearest."

"Have you many visitors?" I asked.

"Too many," he sighed. "It is a mournful privilege that I get granted, in that I am married, and my wife comes often. I cannot forbid it, but it hinders my preparations for my trial very much, and distresses both to no purpose."

"Has Lord Boyd been to see you?"

"Yes, poor fellow! He is disfeoffed, but will not be destitute. I have taken good care of that, thank God!"

"I am very glad to be assured of that."

"Tell me," said he anxiously. "On your soul, Helen, are you provided for?"

"Yes, I am most amply secured. Nor, were it otherwise, could I take aught from you."

"Promise me something, however, Helen!"

"Anything in the world that I can do."

"I have left two thousand pounds to you by deed of gift. You will take it?"

"I have plenty, truly."

"But you have promised. It is taking nothing from my family, they would not have. It is set

apart for the repose of my soul, by a good Catholic kinsman, happily dead, who left it to me to dispose of. My soul craves to see you happy, to know you out of the reach of want. My soul! Oh, Helen! My soul has no distinct longing but for you, for your welfare, peace, safety. I have been tormented on your account with fears, now I can go peacefully. It will be a cruel anxiety set at rest."

"You are very good to me," said I, "but——"

"But—you have promised. Take it, Helen. How else do I know you are not deceiving me, or yourself? That, though little, is secure. Helen! do not torment me by a refusal, this is no time for forms. Loving you, it has been my happiness in prison to secure this to you. I had given up hope of seeing you, but I knew your true heart would not forget me. In this present state of affairs you may be robbed of all you have. Make me happy by taking this wretched money."

"I will take it."

"Swear you will keep it, for my sake."

"I will keep it, for your sake."

"Here, then," said he, rapidly writing out an order on his banker. "Paterson will cash it for you without a word. He is a very old friend of mine, and it is now common for us to help each other thus." He wrote a few lines to his banker,

and folded it up in them, directing them. "Now," said he, "I am happy. Fear for you haunted me. Come to my heart once, once more."

"Lady Chetwynd, I await your ladyship's leisure."

It was Tremenheere, who looked in rather grimly.

"D——n it," muttered Sergius. Then aloud: "Ah, General Tremenheere. How are you?"

"I am very well," said he, entering. "Assure your lordship of my sorrow to see you thus."

"Thank you! It, I suppose, was to be."

"We must go," said the General uneasily, as Sergius retained my hand closely clasped in his.

"Come again," he whispered, releasing me with a sigh.

"If I do not, believe that I cannot." I kissed his hand, my tears raining on it, and following the General was soon out in the dusk of evening city-life.

Placing me in a chair, four bearers were soon trotting off westward with me. He followed on foot. Arrived, we found Lady Farringdon waiting dinner for us, alarmed at our lateness; and after—as she went to an assembly, attended by the General—I went to bed, for the

first time, for many nights, without a sleeping draught. All images of pain for Sergius had fled for ever. Life for him was, I knew, practically over. It remained only to cheer, comfort, console him. I slept dreamlessly.

In the morning all my thoughts centred on Kilmarnock. I asked the General, who was writing letters, when he would be at liberty to come again.

"Come where?" said he, coldly, keeping his pen on the paper, as though its fringed feather wished to fly on its mission.

"Certainly," said I, as icily as himself, "I might have stated that I meant the Tower; but having taken such extraordinary means to reach London for that purpose, I thought it would be understood."

"My dear Lady Clifford," said he, "the admission obtained by Lady Farringdon will at most serve but twice. Were it not better, then, to defer your visit a day or two?"

"Yes," said I, bitterly, "and if you have a friend drowning, measure him off an inch of plank, lest the rest should not suffice for yourself. Am I to understand you as refusing?"

"Certainly not, but as counselling. My dear," as I shed tears of bitter disappointment, which rained unchecked from my eyes, "Kilmarnock

is not a proper object for so much well-meant pity. I am not desirous of, especially now, saying a harsh word of him; but he is a *roué*, and I am much mistaken if he regards your visit as simply one of friendship and condolence."

"Have done," said I, fiercely, "with this political spite! Kilmarnock is helpless, or you dare not so miscall him. No matter for your escort, for your orders. I have still that of Cumberland, and I will go to him alone."

"Well, well," said he, with a little twist of his mouth, which looked like a half-hid smile, "perhaps I am wrong; his wife will doubtless be there, poor fellow."

"Then," said I, "I will not trespass on them, believe me, but await her going," and hurrying away to attire myself; I came back, feverishly anxious to be on the road.

There was no disguising that the General came reluctantly—a reluctance that increased as we were again admitted; but he was so good as to again make his visit one to Balmerino, and this time Sergius came from their joint sitting-room to his own apartment, where I waited, almost expecting a rebuff for this eager devotion, after Tremenheere's chilling comments. I would not have told him of it, but detecting something amiss he asked its cause.

"Helen," said he, on hearing it, "if you let this, or any such idle commentary stop you——" He stopped, unable to speak.

"Is it likely?" said I. "My only fear was for you—of you. Will it be—be unpleasant for you to be commented on?"

"Nonsense," said he, "no one but an old army man would have made so absurd a statement. Who is here to comment? I have visitors of all sorts, as have the others. Do not let Tremenheere, who dislikes the trouble, escort you. I will get Boyd to call for you, then you can come in together freely enough; he has a pass. Ah, he is here."

Boyd came in.

"My dear father," said he, "I am sorry to disappoint you by being so late. Mother was not well enough to come; will, however, come to-morrow."

"Boyd," said Kilmarnock, passing over his remark, "have you forgot Lady Clifford?"

"No, sir," said he, bowing to me. "For the moment I had, as we heard she was in France. Only the other day mother received a letter stating it to be so. I am very glad it is not so, madam; my father needs all his friends now."

"My presence must not be known here," said

I, "as a Clifford. I am now staying with Lady Farringdon, and come as her niece, Eleanor Chetwynd."

"Why," said Boyd with a laugh, "Nell Chetwynd is not at all handsome; but your ladyship's will is law, I will not mention having met you," especially to my mother, his laughing eyes seemed to say, as he bent his knee and kissed my hand.

"That will do," said Kilmarnock, austerely. "You understand, that to no one is Lady Clifford's presence in England to be mentioned by you; even if others see her, you are not released from strict silence."

Boyd gravely signified assent to this—with a most unfilial twinkle in his eyes, but gravity and submission on his face.

"I say," said he hurriedly, as Kilmarnock left the room for a moment, "why does he think me such a fool, Lady Clifford? I know you are old friends, and St. Peter himself had angels to visit him in prison. Ha, ha! Don't breathe that I said so. Did you know I was disfeoffed, all our estates confiscated? Ah, Lady Clifford, it is truly good of you to come here and see him; he always thought a whole lot of you, and it will cheer him a little. My poor mother does nothing but weep when she comes; she

cannot help it, but it does not raise a man's spirit or hopes. He is sure to get off, as I keep telling her; but no. She would be far better away till it is over."

At this I broke into hysterical sobs. "Till it is over!"—'twas as the reading of a death-warrant.

"Cromartie wants to see you," said Kilmarnock, re-entering, and Boyd, glad to escape this monotony of weeping, which seemed to oppress him, went.

"Was ever a poor wretch tormented like this?" said Serguis, taking my hands forcibly from before my face. "Sweet, stop! I just cannot bear it."

"I will be wiser," said I, as he dried my tears. "Are you getting on with your defence?"

"Yes, my sweet darling; but never mind about business now, time is too short. Helen, that General is a brute. You shall come with him no more. Where is Lady Farringdon living? In Mayfair? There, I have it written down. I will send an escort for you—Boyd, or someone. Nell, my darling, I am afraid it is but a blank outlook for me."

"I have made you miserable!" My arms clasped his bowed-down head; a deep sob answered me.

"There," said he, embracing me, "it is absurd for a man to be his own chief mourner. You can bring me some handkerchiefs, Helen, on your next visit, if you will. Do not tremble dear. Think, if we had not been suffered to meet again! This makes amends for years. I dreamt of you last night—I had, madam, that scroll you gave me under the pillow. Like a lovesick shepherd, every time I awoke I pressed it to my lips. It is a talisman of power. My life is transformed since you came. If it is, as I judge, hurrying on to its close, it has at the last had such happiness crowded into it that I would give up fifty lives for. You love me!—we shall meet again; nothing can separate love. What sweet and perfect lips you have, soft as roses and— By——, here's that fool Tremenheere coming. So, Lady Clifford, if you can bring or send me those handkerchiefs, I shall be beholden to you."

"I will, milord."

General Tremenheere and Boyd entered together.

"Sir," said Serguis stiffly, addressing the General, "a man in prison has few friends; and though you may reasonably object to being classed among them, there is no earthly reason why you should dissuade others from kindness

to me. I am helpless, or this would not be an appeal."

"What have I done?" said the General. "My dear Lord Kilmarnock, believe me, none deserve this less of you, or better desire to help you. It is true that for a moment I withstood Lady Clifford's wish to come, but solely that I was very busy. It is a world, as you are aware, of everyone for himself; but I gave way, and am here. Could I do more—frankly?"

"Like your d——d impudence, calling me a *roué!*" muttered Sergius—as, after sullenly bowing acceptance of the General's apology, that individual went on a few steps in advance—"I would like to call you out."

"I will," said Boyd briskly. "Give me a list of any you want pinked—I was senior fencer at our college." This in a whisper.

Sergius smiled at this. "Harkye!" said he "You will call to-morrow at Curzon Street, and escort Lady Chetwynd here at a convenient time for her. We will not trouble any Tremenheere of the lot with our arrangements."

* * * * *

"Lady Clifford," said Tremenheere austerely, on our arrival home, "had I known that you confessed to Kilmarnock, and that everything opposite to his will was mortal sin to both of

you, I should scarce have postponed important letters to go and be lectured at the Tower—lion or no lion."

"Is it not reasonable," said I, "that a man whose days may be numbered should feel impatience and indignation at formalities that at another time would be well to observe? I do not confess to him, but evasion to him now seems cruel, nay, impossible. I am sorry you are offended. Thank you heartily for coming."

"Well," said he, with some relenting, "I must work double tides to make up for it. Shall you be going to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir; but I have an escort provided."

"Who is it, if I may know?"

"It is Lord Boyd."

"What! Kilmarnock's son?"

"Yes."

The General shrugged his shoulders, settled to his writing, then rose again and approached me—where I sat knitting—and laid his hand heavily on my shoulder.

"Lady Clifford," said he, "I speak to you as to Fernie. You will be deliberately cruel to take Boyd's escort; becoming known, 'twould break his mother's heart. At a time when, to my certain knowledge, Kilmarnock alleges business to prevent her too frequent coming, he

fiercely challenges my right of counselling you away, and to ensure your visits orders Boyd on escort duty. Allowing everything for his position, his anxieties—the charm of your presence to a dreary day—still, my dear, consider. His first duty is to his family."

"In his life," said I, "he has never neglected a duty. I do Lady Kilmarnock no wrong; we have been close friends for years. If there be infamy in going, I will bear it; danger, I will brave it; difficulty, I will overcome it. You mean well and kindly, and I thank you; but so long as he desires it, I will go to him."

"I expected no less," said he; "but my duty as censor ends here. Nor will I—as I could—put in a word to Tom Pelham to stop this mad proceeding."

"I would go to his brother," said I. "Henry Pelham is a clever man—nor have I ever appealed in vain to a man of sense."

"That I can well believe," said he, as with drowned eyes, I resumed my knitting, and he—the cruel wretch—his writing. Presently Lady Farringdon came in.

"Why, my dear," said she, "you must not despond too much about your friend. I, myself, will take you to-morrow, if the General, as I gather, is tired of it. Henry Pelham returns to-

day, General. Shall we interest him in this Damon and Pythias business?"

"By all means," said Tremenheere; "for if once—as is not unlikely—his Grace is influenced against it, 'twill be impossible to renew it. Henry never goes directly against any pronounced sentence of Tom's."

"Henry Pelham is a very nice man," said milady, examining my knitting, "he is, in fact, much like Kilmarnock—but a better man, my dear. Kilmarnock has such long arms he gives one the idea of—of a bear hugging one.'

Tremenheere laughed heartily at this, and looked at me. I could not avoid a smile.

"Dolly," said he, "I cannot after that let you go. The poor man is on his trial, and if he takes to hugging you, 'twill yet further stretch his arms, to his prejudice."

"As to that," said she, "I should simply tell his wife; even a bear must respect her feelings. Yet I don't know that I should; 'tis the nature of bears to hug, and we did not make them, so why afflict ourselves with their peculiarities?"

She darted a quick glance at the General, who resumed his writing with a smile.

This, though resenting it, I had to put up with —the open misconstruction of our friendship— yet it fell dully on a brain and heart preoccupied

with dread and gnawing sorrow. Let them think what they might, the moments were fast ebbing. What would it profit me after, to remember that I had properly resented this idle speculation of motives, properly cleared myself of suspicion? The dull aching pain would not thereby be lessened for either of us—its only alleviation was in meeting.

At one time I thought, lying on my bed perplexed, of an appeal to Lady Kilmarnock. I did not desire to do any one thing that would lessen Sergius in her love, or the esteem of his friends, should my visits to him become after known to them.

"I will risk it," said Sergius moodily, when I mooted this project to him. "None can escape calumny, nor do I care for it—nor would I relinquish an instant of your company, though I went down to posterity black as night. As for reconciling everything to appearances, 'tis impossible. So, my dear, waste no more conjectures, no more vain plans over it, no more sweet and precious time. Balmerino still thinks we have political business, when, in effect, that is for ever over. Oh, my dear, all the world, all who have a spark of sympathy, of humanity, would be with us!"

So no approach was made to Lady Margaret;

and once, making her visit while I was there, Balmerino begged me, at Sergius' instance I was sure, to write a letter for him, "and that," said he, "you can do in my cell, where is a better light."

Once within, he smiled sadly.

"Lady Clifford," said he, "even in prison to be forced into forms, into conventional aspects, is adding to the bitterness of bondage; but, my dear, be patient with Kilmarnock. You are all he now values on earth, he has told me so. I inclined to be severe, but of what use is self-deception? I owned his reasons and arguments to be unanswerable. He loves you. He ought not. Nor ought we, if oughts count, to be here —to have been what the winners now call rebels. Ought is of value only to free agents, and to deprive Kilmarnock of your presence for the few remaining days of his life were too cruel even for a torturer—nor will I."

In all this I recognised the special pleading of Sergius himself, and smiled and sighed together. Honest Balmerino had become subject to the powerful will of Sergius, to his genius for conversion, of which as a Stuart missionary I had seen so much—nay, was myself a convert to it.

"I will, however," said I, "go. Straighten this hood for me, milord. Tell Sergius from me——" I paused.

"Nay," said he, "speak out. Poor fellow! Could he not speak of you I think he would die, stifled by excess of feeling."

"I will write it," said I, and penning a little loving note, I kissed it and gave it to Balmerino to give to him, and was on tiptoe for flight—having the cell door ajar—when the tall figure of Lady Kilmarnock, attended by Boyd, came from Sergius' cell and seated herself at the table in the common room, saluting Cromartie, who was roaming listlessly about the small apartment, cordially.

"When, milord," said she, "did you last hear from your wife, and how then was she?"

"Not well," said he, "but better off than some, in that she has her husband's love." He looked angrily at Kilmarnock, whose lip curled at this defiance. Cromartie was a fool, who thought himself to be a pattern.

"Of that I am sure," said Milady K., "and you know, milord, the sweetness of that comfort is my only refuge from a broke heart. William is all my own. My noble Will! To see him so serene in suffering, so patient in loneliness, enduring this light and vain affliction as a Christian should. My dearest Will! Would you had a comforter when I have gone!

Balmerino, the wicked wretch, was grinning;

Cromartie was purple with a desire to denounce us all; but fighting against this ethical impulse was the knowledge that my friends stood well with the Ministry, with Newcastle himself, and, believing me to be Eleanor Chetwynd, he, though tempted to denounce me, yet dared not risk a single chance of conciliating the most insignificant member of the Hanover party.

I had a mind to go out and appeal to Lady Kilmarnock. This Balmerino stopped.

"Madness," said he in a whisper. "It is useless. Were you an angel—as you are—she would not believe it."

Boyd broke the silence. "I will stay," said he, "awhile, with my father, if your ladyship can get home unattended."

"No," said Kilmarnock, "that I cannot permit. You must attend your mother home."

"Well, my lord," said she, rising and giving her hand to Cromartie, "be sure I shall visit your lady and tell her to be hopeful, for you have many friends and not one enemy. Keep so, beseech you, for her sake."

Kissing her hand, poor Cromartie saw her depart with Boyd, after an affectionate farewell of Kilmarnock, who returned to his apartment.

"Will it be too much for your patience," said I, coming from Balmerino's cell, and approaching

Cromartie, who backed a step or two, "to give this to Milord Kilmarnock? And believe me, that there are political considerations which alone prevent my presence being disclosed to all here. I am that Helen Clifford, of whom you must have heard, and whom you may perhaps have seen."

I put back my hood gently. I had no special anger against his dull misconstruction. He was a dull man with a dull wife, whose duty and delight faithfully fulfilled itself in worshipping him. His life was empty of all claim to high feeling, to heroism; yet was he an honest man, nor would not wilfully injure anyone.

"Lady Clifford!" said he with a gasp, "is it possible that you are here?"

"Ay," said I, "quite possible; and being so, beseech you forswear your perhaps natural feeling for Milady Kilmarnock. Other things than rivalship to her induce this risk—affairs of moment. I have Newcastle's own pass; so should you, as you were meditating just now, inform anyone of anything you may imagine or fashion in your own mind, beware!—for such communication would be a two-edged sword."

I gently drew my hood on again. Cromartie, from purple, had become very pale. He had at all times overrated my political influence, which

it had been not so long since a silly fashion to exaggerate. He still clung dully to his old creed —that I had power.

I left him just as Sergius re-entered, after rapidly bidding him respect my incognita to him ; and giving Kilmarnock the little note I had writ, was for going.

"Not this minute," he implored, walking with me to the farthest verge of the room. "To you, with a thousand new sights as you drive through the city, the relief I feel at even seeing you would be incredible ; I count the very minutes to your coming. What is amiss with Cromartie ?"

"Nothing. I thought best to tell him who I was ; and he was ever a little afraid of me—is so still. When I put back my hood, and told him I was Helen Clifford, he started as though I had said hooded serpent. I also said my presence here was political. Oh, my dear, if any policy of mine could free you ! Can you devise nothing that I can do ? For your sake I would undergo any extreme of submission, use any means. Let me go to Henry Pelham—to Cumberland—to the King. I will get introductions, and do all in order. Dull as this great grief of seeing you here makes me, the hope of being useful will fall like dew on my heart."

"My dearest," said he, "all that has been

done skilfully and well. Hope some of my people entertain, I know, on slight grounds. Now, sweet, believe me, you can do nothing, or I would gladly employ your fine intelligence. Helen, all you can do, you do nobly, comforting me with your sweet friendship, which I would not exchange for life itself."

"Kil," said Balmerino, sauntering up, "I see the relief-guard has turned out; locking-up time; best let Lady Eleanor hurry." He returned considerately to his room.

"There," said Kilmarnock, "is a hug that would suit Lady Dorothy. Helen, sweet, if we could, by dying together, remain together for eternity, would you come with me?"

"Yes, a thousand times, could we but be sure. Now, Sergius, I must go, I hear the warder on the stairs."

"No matter," said he, "they are not entirely incorruptible, and I still have gold. Oh, my sweet darling, come early to-morrow; there will be, happily, no other visitors, for the next day is my trial—a mere farce. Yet, come to it, Nell, and sit where I can see you. Do not be frightened at the sentence, 'tis but beheading Now I must, I suppose, let you go—that is the death; not a mere blow of an axe. Sweet farewell till to-morrow!"

The warder now stood within and coughed, then busied himself with the outside lock, while, with a rain of slow kisses, I was freed, and went slowly down the winding stairway—was scrutinised by another warder, and passed the guard drawn up in the courtyard, one of whom I heard whisper his neighbour that I was Lady Eleanor Chetwynd, Lord Balmerino's granddaughter. Such and so inaccurately does report describe us, even when means of verity are at hand.

"So how," thought I, "can history be better than a patchwork—mostly lies—since truth lies at this man's reach, yet he will not be troubled to grasp it?"

"Cromartie too," I muttered; "but he is a fool, and Sergius will take order for him."

Hurrying on, I met the chariot sent for me, and returned safely home.

* * * * * *

"I know who you are—I have known about you for years," said Henry Pelham, when, having met him at dinner at Lady Farringdon's, we were after near each other in the large withdrawing-room.

To him I had been presented as Lady Chetwynd, and he had acquiesced in the imposture

obligingly enough. Now, man-like, he must needs display his superior knowledge.

"If you know me," said I, "you know the unhappiest creature breathing." I turned listlessly from his regard to thoughts of Kilmarnock.

"Lady Chetwynd," said he, "there is much misery abroad just now that is inevitable. Had your people succeeded, ours had been in misery —'tis the natural sequence to a national struggle. Yet any alleviations that so humble a person may, that I will do, and especially to the poor women of the party, whose sufferings I would willingly remit, and pile it all on the men—the leaders especially."

"You are brutal!" said I, angrily.

> "Oh, what a deal of scorn looks beautiful
> In the contempt and anger of that lip,"

said he, gazing at me admiringly. "No, my dear, I am not brutal. It is, as the French say, facts which are so. I say again, that for a man of Kilmarnock's talent to associate himself seriously as the director of Stuart's foolish attempt on the country, deserves condign punishment, for it involves the misery of thousands."

"I cannot listen to this," said I. "I wish I could temporise, flatter, beseech as do others, with any hope of success for the remission of

the cruel vengeance to be taken on them—not for their faults, but for their failure. Who but would have praised Kilmarnock had he but succeeded; who failed to experience the clemency his counsels ever inculcated?"

"And in practice," said he. "Who wrote that order for the slaughter of English prisoners after Culloden?"

"A base lie, of a baser liar, Cumberland!" said I scornfully, "and that, if you don't know, you are wilful blind!"

"Hush!" said he, looking round uneasily. "Though I cannot condemn this belief in you, yet I ought not to listen."

"Then go," said I indifferently. "You, who consent to Kilmarnock's death so easily, but a month gone were counting on his possible clemency as the trusted adviser of his unfortunate friend and master! You, who so glibly say what men ought, and settle what they ought not to do—if you did right yourself, would influence your foreign ruler to justice, to mercy! History will do them right, handing over their oppressors, English or German, to deserved obloquy!"

"You speak plainly, Lady Clifford, and it is dangerous to do so."

"I know to whom I speak, sir; danger has now but little terror for me."

"Do not say so," said he pityingly, then began on other topics of talk, offering to get me a ticket for the trial on the morrow, at Westminster Hall.

"Yes," said I bitterly, "you may. I shall be glad to see my friends have even this shadow of decent treatment, this pretence of trial, whose conclusion is foregone."

"Truly," said he, "this is exceeding grave railing of yours, and ought, were I not more of man than minister, to place you beside them, as 'tis well known you were present at all their councils, and a friend of the Prince. But, my dear lady, be content to find so safe a listener, beseech you; chivalry enters very little into State trials, and youth and beauty have ever been more a Stuart than a Hanover taste. Believe me, they will have fair trial by their peers; the King hath besides heaps of petitions for them, so do not count all as their mean enemies. Westminster Hall will stifle with sighs for them, and I would willingly die myself, to be so grieved over by beauty and loveliness throughout the kingdom."

I could make make no answer. The scattered groups in the large room, the waxlights, all slid by me in one transparency, seen through despairing tears; a bitter sob nigh choked me.

Abruptly leaving Pelham to his self-satisfied conscience, I gained a near door and reached my own room.

Down on my knees I went, and invoked all the bitterness of Divine vengeance on Cumberland for his lie about Kilmarnock; on all Hanoverites whosoever, for their adherence to such dull murderers; and crept sobbing into bed, more than a murderer at heart, since with each waking thought I heaped direst tortures on Hanover, trebly dire on the beast Cumberland, comforting myself this way to a calm sleep.

* * * * * *

In the morning early I went to the Tower, attended only by a servant, and hurried in. But little uncertainty reigned amongst the three. Cromartie was the most agitated. Death, to him, meant exclusion from a dust-heap of dull joys and small ambitions; to the others, a penalty for the failure of high aims and noble acts—not unforeseen as a consequence of failure, nor allowed on its approach to unnerve their high courage and noble fortitude.

Kilmarnock begged me to come into his cell.

"Helen," said he, "I have no real hope now.

'These lips that kiss the queen, shall sweep the ground.'

As did Suffolk's ; but, my dear, my last wish to you is not to grieve over my fate. Crowds of better men were killed at Culloden, without the chance of a farewell to their loved ones. How you have comforted me these last days, how nobly you have devoted yourself to your unhappy friend, is writ in my heart. Dear Helen, —always dear, now dearest—remember how little there is to grieve for in giving up an unsuccessful life. Promise me not to sorrow at the conclusion Fate awards to it. I love you, sweet, and in death as in life your grief would hurt me. Promise me this, sweet, or the blow that severs my head will break my heart. Promise, my own darling!"

"I cannot!" said I, sobbing. "Oh, Sergius! kill me first. How can I live after—how can I?"

"'Tis but a separation for a little while," said he with a sob. "Helen, do not unman me. See, my hair is rough, my darling; shall the fine ladies not admire your old statesman? Smooth it for me, beseech you."

He knelt before me, and, through blinding tears, I arranged it—so foppishly he alleged that it would be remarked, and he blamed with it. I did not tell him of my interview with Henry Pelham, but agreed that I would, in any event, go to France, to M'Causland.

Clasped in his arms, awaiting the summons of the warder—

"Tell me," said I, "have I, in my conscience, to think I lessened your love for your wife—that my presence prevails on you to, in anywise, neglect her?"

"Put such a thought quite from you," he answered. "I have omitted no duty, no affection to her. We never were lovers; you are my only love, my ideal of woman realized, worshipped. Had you not existed, she had paid no more, or fewer visits, been neither more nor less moved. You have no shadow of reason to blame yourself. Loving you has been to me both rapture and agony. In your love I have lived an intense life. You are not to blame that I loved you, nor I for loving. My soul, my sweet, what new casuistry? I tell you that, for a thousand lives, I would not have missed your love. All the happiness of heaven were less to me than you have been—my darling, my waking thought, my sleeping vision! What can separate us? In time, in eternity, wherever the mystery of the soul may be, there we shall meet to be together for ever!"

* * * * * *

"Where will you sit in the Hall—what will you carry that I may at once see you? A red

fan, a white hood? For those, then, I will look. The trial is over to me—I know it beforehand. Here is our summons—say farewell, in case, oh, in case of any accident! God bless you! Keep this pencil, which has writ so much of what is now called Treason—

> 'Treason doth never prosper, what's the reason?
> Why, when it prospers, none dare call it treason.'"

With the gold pencil in my hand, I bade farewell to Balmerino and Cromartie; and, seeing them depart, hurried home, in a feverous dream, to prepare for going with Lady Farringdon to the Hall.

* * * * * *

"That is a beautiful woman in the white hood!" Strained eyes, and fevered cheeks—anything glazed or high-coloured, no matter though anguish itself be the artist.

I drew my hood forward and held my fan high, suffocating and nigh fainting, as, before me, I saw the three figures that, in the thronging crowds, were the only living presences to me. Lady Farringdon put her arm round me, a lady near poured strong essence to her kerchief, and pressed it on me.

"Oh, my God, let me die now! now!" I heard no other words coherently; these, the moan of despair rang in mine ears. I saw

dimly Sergius' face, grave and calm, and waved him a greeting—but the scene was too much. Whether, as St. Paul says, I was in the body or out of the body during the whole of it, I cannot say; my soul was away. I sat, statue-like and still, and went home, far more dead than living, so that next day I could not visit Sergius, nor the day following. A trance of despair held me, broken by Lord Boyd's appearance, who was intensely agitated on seeing me.

"You will come?" said he imploringly. "Think, Lady Clifford, how short the time now is! Come, even if you are ill."

I dressed, icy despair numbing my slow fingers, and went with him, silent and ghost-like. Balmerino met me in the common room. To him, I expressed my deep sorrow for his fate.

"Hush, my dear," said he. "I am an old fellow, to die is no matter to me; but why, after all that has passed, suffer Kilmarnock to despair? He is too ill to rise, nor could not outlive another day's desertion."

"I had not deserted you," said I, entering the cell, where, white and wan, like a man already dead, Sergius lay, his eyes closed, his head on his uneasy pillow.

"Then why?"—— He could for awhile say no more.

"Why," said I, sitting beside him, "I was ill, yet hoped against hope to come. Can you doubt it?"

He opened his eyes languidly. I was shocked at their dull and lustreless glance.

"Why," he repeated, a heavy sob stopped him, and he rose. "Why, Helen, was this torture inflicted?"

"My dear," said I, pained beyond expression, "I was ill. Forgive me!"

"Yes," said he, "if I can."

"There is no if, Sergius. My dearest, look at me. Can you not believe me?"

His eyes lightened and became brighter, his face put off its deadly pallor as I smoothed it softly. He made no answer to my appeal for sympathy, busied and happy in receiving it for himself, in assuring me I was forgiven. Such a change in an instant was wrought in him as was scarce credible. Balmerino, as we went outstared; Cromartie, reading a long letter, sighed, then threw down his letter, rose, and filled a silver cup with wine from his own store.

"Take some wine, madam," said he; "and you, Kil, had best take some also."

"If I can," said he, feigning that I was greedily drinking it all. "If—why, Helen, you have left me but a kiss."

"It seems a very liquid one," said I, as he took a long draught.

"Have some more," said Cromartie, pushing the bottle towards him, and resuming his letter.

"You shall so," said Balmerino, refilling the cup. "Why, man, you are but a ghost, you have frighted all the colour from milady's face."

Sergius put aside the cup.

"Not now," said he. "To-night, Cromartie, we will toast all our friends for the last time."

Cromartie groaned. Balmerino took my hand and kissed it.

"Chief of whom," said he, "shall be Lady Clifford, who has so nobly held by us in our adversities, defying evil days and evil tongues. My dear, you have our thanks for visiting us in our misery."

"And mine," said Cromartie, heartily. "I am a plain man, Lady Clifford. I can but own to adverse prepossessions, for which I am now heartily sorry. From my heart I thank you for your noble sympathy in our distresses."

He bent his knee and kissed my hand. Poor fellow! In that minute he forgot how biassed he had been against me, rejoicing in the change my presence had wrought in his friend Kilmarnock.

They were very lonely, these three men,

formal visits from friends apart—who contrived mainly to convey their disapproval of treason in general, and theirs in especial. They had not much more sympathy than usually falls to the lot of the unsuccessful—mine they held dear.

To Balmerino, drawing him aside, I gave the white cockade obtained from the woman at the wayside inn, breaking my word to her in a way surely to be forgiven.

"'Twas Casimir's own," said I, earnestly.

Balmerino smiled. "Oh! the Prince's—Casimir?"

"Yes, exactly—that is one of his names.

He put it inside his coat.

"Tell him," said he, "with my duty and love, that I wore this to the very last. Kil may recant, as I believe he will, he hath long borne a grudge to the lad; but that's not it; he has his family to consider—Boyd and the others. He tells me he shall, nor is it in me to blame him. Much of his counsel was disregarded, but I would suffer a hundred deaths ere I would tear the white cockade from my coat and put on Hanover livery. Tell your Casimir, and my Charlie so."

"I will," said I. "Nor will he need telling, for he loves you."

"You dear girl," said he, "who would not

love you? What other woman would leave her own selfish griefs to comfort an old Jacobite under sentence?"

He held my hand in a warm close pressure. Kilmarnock, talking to Boyd, was watching him and smiled, coming, however, forward, to claim me.

"Nell," said he, "I have been talking to Boyd of his future, his duty, and so forth. I have done my best, believe me, and, in his interest, shall forswear Stuart at the last. Do not shrink from me; it is a hopeless cause. There will be no return to that dynasty. Me it will not benefit, nor injure him. So long as I could, I served him faithfully, with little thanks. Nor is this apostasy. I sincerely believe that, in thus doing, I shall more dissuade other hopeless risings, more of this utter misery, than—— Oh, my dear! it is hard to die without that glamour of constancy to a false creed which will make of Balmerino a martyr, and leave me, for forswearing it, as of a doubtful courage!"

"That it shall not," said I. "Were you to give no reasons, no one but would judge you acted from a good motive, and with sound reason; and Casimir, though grieved that you judge his cause completely hopeless, will do you justice."

"My anxiety now is," said he, "lest Boyd should offer his sword and service to Stuart. Helen, should it so chance that you can dissuade him from this, will you?"

"Faithfully, at whatever cost."

"My darling, what you have been to me, no words can express, no thought compass."

"Forgive me, then, that I stopped away yesterday. I was nearly dead, half unconscious. That dreadful, unrighteous sentence. Would God I could suffer it for you!"

"With me," said he, "my greatest grief is to leave you. My dear, it is not long now—four weeks, Helen!"

"Oh!" said I, trembling with joy, for I had been anticipating but a few days, and been afraid to ask, "Oh, my dearest, what may not happen in that time! Hanover may die, I may die, which I sincerely wish."

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Why, rehearse that pleasant, painful interview! Suffice that I left him comforted, looking more like himself. To me in this deplorable anxiety four weeks seemed a reprieve—I even slept soundly.

* * * * * *

What could I do more? I went every day. A

fortnight yet—I still clung to hope. Cromartie was reprieved!

"You will be," said I.

Sergius shook his head.

"Oh, my God!" I moaned. "They cannot kill you!"

"No," said he, gloomily, "you are killing me." Then repented this harshness with tears, for I fainted, fearing him displeased.

Only a week! Oh, Hanover, may heaven shut its gates upon you for all time, for this cruel butchery of brave men!

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Sergius was resigned, all his affairs arranged. We grew calm. Agony had spent itself to be replaced by hope—of what we had no definite idea, save that we must meet hereafter.

Imprisonment told upon him insensibly. He had the kind ministrations of his friend Home, a Presbyterian, who assured me privately that he would be with him in the hour of—oh God!—of his death, as earthly comforter to the very end!

* * * * * *

We would sit for long spaces silent, hand clasping hand, so little unsealed the agony of my tears, which seemed stanchless. Silence contented both, so we were together.

For Balmerino, who had grown fond of me, I did many a message, brought many a flower and present to; undertook many a careful farewell to distant friends, all written down orderly save where tears blotted it.

On the seventeenth I went to the Tower as usual. Lady Kilmarnock was there, Lord Boyd, and Home the minister. No one specially to see Balmerino, who was furbishing up his rebellious regimentals, but stopped to embrace me and receive a white rose I had brought.

"Come in here," said he, "and for God's sake, Helen" (he had come to call me Helen) "be brave, or cry now. There are none to weep over poor old Balmerino."

"Indeed," said I, bursting into bitter tears, "I feel for you, milord. Do not think me indifferent! But oh, Sergius! Sergius! Would to God I might die—I, that am useless, and you escape!"

"Your poor beautiful eyes," said he, "have had no rest, I can see; but, my dear, we feel it most for you and those we leave, as you for us. Is not this interchange of misery an invention of the arch-enemy? Surely God never meant our natural feelings to fool us into utter agonizing misery! Perchance that is part of this legal murder. It must be so," he muttered aside.

"Listen to that woman. Sergius will be sick of sobs and tears for ever. Helen, this prison business has worn him out. To-morrow he will be at rest; think of that, my dear—rest complete, peaceful! We shall not hear this weeping. Oh, Helen, my dear, would I could die for both, and leave you your friend, you know I would were it possible. Hark, they are praying! Home is there—let us pray."

We went on our knees. A fierce anathema of Hanover rose to my lips—with difficulty I withheld its utterance. Balmerino, with bowed head, said simply:

"God be merciful to me a sinner, for Christ's sake. Amen. To Helen Clifford, and comfort her at once as you comforted Mary and Martha for their brother, for she hath been a sister to imprisoned men in their distress. Bless my brave true Prince, Charles, and all his liege followers; and, if not here, let him reign with you hereafter. Comfort all that this rising hath distressed! Forgive us our sins, for Christ's sake, our Redeemer, our Saviour. Amen."

Then for awhile our lips moved silently—tumultuous prayer, agonising petition, rising from the heart for those we loved.

We rose from our knees somewhat comforted.

Brave old Balmerino had the faith of an Apostle, the humility of a martyr. My tears were stilled, a little comfort came to my trembling heart. There was above all a Supreme Judge, who would know Kilmarnock guiltless.

This wretched life, so threatened, so tormented, was not all. Here he had *not* been judged by his peers; not one who sat in judgment but was his inferior in mind, in heart, in merit! There —I smiled, even I, at the thought, glancing as a sunbeam over a stormy sea—there archangels will be his peers! Balmerino, who was looking intently at me, begged my thought, and smiled too, at which my tears overflowed.

"Now, come, come," said he, "Kil is a good fellow, but not—well he *is* an archangel. Be content."

"'Twas but a thought," said I indignantly.

"No," said he, with a twinkle in his eyes, "'tis a reality to you. And why not? as to me *you* seem scarce less than an angel visiting our gloomy prison; 'twas only its being Kil amused me. Forgive me! Be that as it may, Helen, he will be right glad to quit the weary old Tower, as I shall also. Let that thought comfort you; to think we are for ever free of all these frets!"

Then he shed tears, and mine rained down, ceasing suddenly as I had no more to shed.

From his cell, where we stood, we heard convulsive sobs, indistinctly—heartrending sounds.

Presently, Boyd rapidly led his mother forth of the cell and down the stairs; both were weeping.

"I dare not see him," I whispered Balmerino, "Home is with him; nor is it right that his prayers should be hindered by me, or his thoughts taken at the last from his wife and son. Though it break my heart, I will go now—now; tell him why."

"Why, then?" said a stern voice. "Home, come early to-morrow; till then, farewell!"

"Why, then?" went on the stern voice, as like two culprits we stood hand in hand before Kilmarnock. "A pretty plot, eh!" he said, entering. "Milord, take your sword-belt and clean it elsewhere. So"—as Balmerino, with a smile, went out—"a minute, and I had had no farewell! Oh, Helen, Helen, to treat a poor outworn prisoner so! Now I am happy. Nell, I am tired of life. To-morrow, and all the to-morrows will be a blessed rest!"

"My dearest, I hope so."

"I am sure of it. Helen, you are smiling. Oh! a blessed relief, my sweet darling! Nature can

but bear so much strain, and that I have had. I could scarce endure the unreason of their lamentings. I must have some wine. Margaret and Boyd gone! My God! my God! all is, indeed, at an end!"

Balmerino brought in some wine. Sergius' white face and shaking hands demanded rest. Not a little distressed, I earnestly begged to withdraw, only to increase his agitation.

"Can you not wait awhile," said he, "knowing yourself first? Yet Boyd——"

I wished a thousand times I had gone; a thousand humiliating thoughts rushed to my mind. I went to the narrow loophole, angry and sorrowful; where, seeing the cruel menace of the angled stones half meeting to shut out hope, to shut in despair, I repented every thought that was not wholly for him, of pity or of love; forgave a thousand times this oblivion of me in others; and would have been content, so it contented him, to be wholly forgot.

I put my hand out through the bar and felt the sharp edges of the grim and chiselled masonry. Balmerino came in with a little wine for me. Putting it aside with a sob, I hid my face on his friendly shoulder, from which I was forcibly, half-angrily withdrawn. Sergius murmuring, as he smoothed my hair:

"There is no end to a woman's moods. What now?"

Angry with myself, ashamed, I stammered out humble and incoherent excuses, to which he listened absently.

"See," said he, pointing from the loophole to the ships sailing down the Thames, "Boyd is to see you on board a boat bound to France—you are not safe here. Promise me to go. The brute Cumberland will be back next month, and he spares none. Either Boyd or Home will accompany you. Home has made all arrangements—stay for nothing. Are you listening, Helen?"

"Yes."

"And understanding?"

"Yes, quite."

"Then I repeat, let *nothing* stay you. Promise me to at once, and literally fulfil this last wish of mine. Let nothing defer it."

"Nothing—it is your wish."

"Prepare to-night, Helen, promise me, and go to-morrow."

"If I outlive to-morrow, yes; but I cannot outlive it, nor will not!"

"My dearest, outlive it to think of me! Nell I am very tired of life; to-morrow comes rest."

His harassed and weary looks assured me that the thought of rest was itself sweet to him. I

rejoiced that any thought contented him. Presently his face lightened—the strain of this last parting from wife and son passed. He knelt before me, and, at his request, I cut off a lock of hair, that beautiful dark-brown hair that to morrow—— Ah! that agony again, catching at my heart, only to be stilled in his arms.

"Come!" said he. "Such crowding emotions will be mine to-morrow, that this little life would not hold them. A tap on my neck will open a wider field of life to me. It will be no pain, Nell, assure you. I have suffered worse from a rapier-thrust; I suffer worse from this close prison-house. Ah, Helen, remember our hillside camp in the Highlands, and poor Boyd's visit." He laughed. "Cromartie has got off to his eight babies. How they will worship him! A good thing to have eight babies. If I start on this trade of changing dynasties in the future, I will take care to be so provided."

"How cruel of you to laugh at Cromartie! I should hardly think the exchange profitable—all these Tommies and Floras, Bessies and wee Margerys, ugly little boys, and wide-mouthed children."

"How do you know they are wide-mouthed?"

"Oh, well, Cromartie had a mouth from ear to ear, and I suppose the ogre's brood would be like

the ogre! I'm glad he's not going. You and Balmerino will look so much better without him pottering after you, crying over his babies, who are, I'm sure, most uninteresting little wretches."

Sergius laughed heartily.

"Ah, poor fellow!" said he. "I must tell Balmerino this."

"No don't! no, don't! He will but think me a heartless wretch."

"Truly, I must."

He told him; and old Balmerino, busied with the sword-belt, laughed over the escape of their late associate to the terrestrial paradise described.

"So," said he, "now, woman-like, you are wanting us to look smart, seeing there is no escape?"

"Do not think me a wretch!" said I remorsefully.

Sergius, seeing I was affected, drew a sketch of Cromartie that sent us into a convulsion of laughter; and, whereas before we were in a proper state of mind, praying and weeping, we became quite happy and cheerful, which was dreadful in the circumstances, as I remorsefully said.

"Oh, very!" said Sergius, with a grimace, continuing his drawing. "Why, Nell, I have been

to battle and as near to death before, and you are not afraid of death ; so let us draw Cromartie as an ugly fellow. 'Lord, how handsome he is! will be the verdict on me to-morrow."

"It is the verdict on you to-night," say I, taking the pencil from him. "Make me a tiny sketch of yourself."

"Sit then," said he, "that I can look into your eyes, so. Bal, did you ever see lovelier eyes than these? They have a sort of twinkle in them, like a planet."

Balmerino must needs come to look, and the twinkle had much ado not to drown itself.

"There," said Sergius, "I can't draw myself but there is my better self." He gave me a little pencil-sketch of an impossible beauty ; inscribed beneath it was : "A Statesman's Love."

Then, seeing I was disappointed, set to work and made a very fair sketch of his own face, by aid of a looking-glass, writing beneath it : "From Sergius, for Helen." Then sighed and rose, walking about.

Balmerino retired to his cell. I rose to go.

"Not yet," said he, in agitation, waving me back to my seat. "Helen, I must send him a message" (he meant Stuart). "That you will meet again is certain."

"No," said I, breathlessly, "never! It is cruel

to remind me of his desertion, 'twas a forgotten agony. You, too——"

"To-morrow," said he, "I shall be a dead man, out of mind. Be reconciled to him. This counsel to you is the bitterest drop in my cup, but, dear, it must be. I mean writing to him. It is hard; so much that is bitter, perhaps unjust, flows to my pen. I think of the night when we three first met, and it is fitting we should all be associated at this last parting. Then, I was unwittingly cruel to you. Since, I have well expiated that—if remorse can expiate, if love can condone. You have pardoned, pitied, loved me. That has been the happiness of my life. This is what I charge you to do. First, give my farewells and good wishes. Tell him all our differences were forgot and, on my part, forgiven; and, having so done, give him this letter—trust it to no other hand. It concerns us three only."

He read it to me. 'Twas signed "Sergius," and dated "The Tower, August 17th." Its contents, though brief, need not be rehearsed.

"Of every form of words," he went on, "these alone express my meaning. It is a solemn moment to me, and solemn words fit it. I feel less the parting from life, than parting from you. I do not design that, should you meet again, you should be at the mercy of his

wrath and jealousy unprotected. That, from a man whose life was sacrificed to him, must weigh ; he would be a demon else. It will weigh ; if I writ a folio, he would attach less meaning to it. You will give it him yourself on a fitting occasion. No need to tell him 'twas the last night of my life ; that he can see or overlook, as he may choose. 'The Tower' is enough, should his heart be of stone. That is all, Helen, for him. Tell all whom it may concern that that lie of the beast Cumberland, that forgery of his about the prisoners, cost me my life—that it is both a coward forgery and a lie. Take courage, sweet, for to-morrow all bitterness has gone, from its death ; I would die rather than be here, than be helpless. You, Helen, have been an angel to me—no less. God bless you! Let my last thought, my darling, be that you will obey me in going to France at once."

"I will. Sergius, tell me—are you afraid ?' I clung to him, trembling ; the thought of the morrow crept like slow fire through my heart torturing me.

"Not in the least," said he cheerfully, "nor shall not be. Bal and I design to play cards till we are sleepy ; then to bed, like kings before a battle. It is nothing, Helen, the pain—one

instant only. But do not you be present; it looks far worse to a spectator than it is. Do not come, dear."

"Oh, Sergius," said I, "if I could only die for you!"

"That, sweet, is a debt each must himself pay. Men die everywhere. Had I died at Culloden! Oh, Helen, I am thankful to have you here. In any case, my one craving had been to see you, and that has been mercifully granted. My eyes wearied for you—for a tone of your voice, my whole being longed. See how my unspoke prayer has been granted! My heart swells with gratitude. Dear, it is an omen we cannot long be separated. Material worlds may divide us, but we are one soul, one spirit. Remember, sweet, I shall not be here—after—but freed, enfranchised."

"Dear," said I, with a sob, "I meant to bring comfort to you, and tire you out comforting me instead. Oh! I am a weak, selfish wretch! Forgive me."

"I love comforting you, Helen. I must have utterly given way all these slow weeks of mental pain, but for the blessing of your presence. Imprisonment is to me worse than death, my Highland blood revolts at stone walls. You have been as a cordial to heart and brain alike.

Balmerino feels so too; he never tires praising you."

"Give me something to do for you," said I; "every day during my life I shall think of you. Oh, Serguis, it is too cruel! Why should you suffer?"

"It is not suffering, Nell, to get clear of prison for ever, but for you I should here suffer intensely. The man who found stone walls and iron bars a hermitage, was no Highlander, as I am. A few more weeks of this, without you, and I should go mad. I am no Stoic philosopher—a mere man I, who loves freedom, fresh air, and stirring scenes; and, to his heart's core, the woman who loves him, who has run risks, and dared death for him—You! There, sweet, is a Farringdon hug for you. Do not tell her ladyship I said so."

For a space there was silence. His arms forgot to unclasp; his eyes dwelt on my face feature by feature, as though impressing it for ever on his memory; then rested on mine, stern and searching

"Helen, tell me—this is not done out of mere compassion?"

"Sergius, such a doubt, if you feel it, is cruelty. I am heartily sorry for Balmerino and all others who suffer. Ah, Sergius! this is indeed cruel!"

"I know it," said he, triumphantly. "I meant to be cruel, to be assured of a bliss hardly to be realised. You love me! I am answered by that sweet reproach of your eyes. I did not doubt you; 'twas but as an alchemist once more tests tried gold, to be assured yet again of his riches."

"Yet," said I, wistfully and afraid, "'tis but earthly gold, dear, nor must it lead to neglect of better things now."

"It shall not," said he. "Assure you, Home is often with me, and will be to-morrow. Nor is any love all of earth, its origin is ever divine. Mine for you has braced me to the performance of duties the most irksome, in that I felt you would disapprove their neglect. This is my reward, and a right sweet one."

While he was yet speaking, my heart beat violently—nearly to suffocation—with a new hope, a new plan, hopeless in itself, yet to be tried—as we try to wrench away iron bars opposing our freedom.

The twilight was rapidly closing, and obscured by rising storm-clouds. The brown river reflected darkly their shadow. In the sombre courtyards, and about the grey towers, was solitude, only relieved by a lounging beefeater or hurrying soldier. The to-morrow claimed all energies.

Men who had to be astir by daybreak were taking their supper. I suffered Sergius' kisses as in a dream, returning them only for form's sake, as he bade me. I went to wish Balmerino an eternal farewell, and that briefly. Then returned and, held in his arms, awaited with a beating heart the advent of the warder. This one, who now entered, was old, crafty, experienced. Better so. I had before given him gold. He gave me a quick glance as Sergius, with a convulsive sigh, released me. A "God bless you!" a hundred slow kisses, given and returned. I went with the warder, who shut and locked the door. My heart was in my mouth—he gave me time.

"Sir," said I, indistinctly, "I live a long way off, take me into your house. If lodgings here are scarce—dear—I will pay well for them. I would be here early to-morrow. Oh, my God! I cannot talk. Tell me your price—be merciful!"

"Milady," said he, in a whisper, "there's but these stairs. I dare not take you out unless it be to close all the gates on you. We are watched by one another. I could leave you my cloak. You would be in absolute darkness—absolute solitude. Would you not be afraid—scream? though that would be little use here. I am afraid for you—it is so lonely, so dismal, so cold, though 'tis summer."

"I am not afraid," said I. "For God's sake let me stay! I would be near him all night, for the last time on earth."

"You must make it worth my while," said he. 'My living, perhaps my life, depends on chances in this. I am supposed to sit up all night, on guard. The man who relieves me is my nephew, he will be all right. A hundred guineas! I will do it. Don't mind the dark; or, if it chance to be a storm, try to sleep. You are sure you have courage for it—'twill be a long night?"

"Courage, yes; courage to die for him."

He gave me his thick heavy cloak. With this around me, and a whispered "good-night," I sat down on the dirty stairs—dry only in that the thick walls kept out atmospheric damp. A wild exultation held me! Here was I, whose absence he would be bitterly feeling, close at hand—here, almost within call; here, in the same tower; here, when he thought me selfishly sleeping, lapped in luxury, in silk and down! Was I a selfish, conventional wretch, to creep home and forget him, this last night! I had a few biscuits in my reticule, placed there by Lady Farringdon; these I ate. Then, as it became an inky darkness within, and a silence reigned as of the tomb, I wrapped both my own sable-lined carriage-cloak and the heavy

one of the warder around me, and, making a pillow on the stair above—that to-morrow he would tread—slept soundly, breathlessly, happily —I was near him! I would not have been nearer, even if I could. The joy, the exultation were that, being alone, I was yet with him; deserted by all others, I was at hand. True hearts beat for him, true tears were showering down; but I was here—here in this Beauchamp Tower. While all London thought him a lonely prisoner, while all London pitied—I alone acted.

"Oh, my dear!" said I, waking once, and at once realizing my infinite solitude, "you are near. What is good enough for you, is for me ten thousand times too good. Sergius, good-night! Sweet rest, my martyr, on this your last earthly night. Could you but know how near to you I am!"

Again I slept, more sweetly than on any down bed; the chance had been so desperate, but was achieved. I felt no cold, the fur lining of my cloak was soft and rich, warm and comforting. Had it been instead threadbare, old, worn —but then I should not be here—this precious privilege denied. Oh, how cruel was this worship of gold! Ought I in justice to buy a privilege which would have been denied to one per-

chance as faithful, yet poor? Yet, in doing so, I but cheated a hateful German tyrant—a rooting hog I would gladly have killed—doubtless now snoring in uneasy slumber, tormented in his dull conscience by the crime he contemplated of taking these brave bright lives!

Heavy sleep mercifully held me till the morning, late in showing its golden face here. Nuttall, the warder, bent his grey fox-face over me, with a lantern, very early, rousing me.

"Milady," he whispered, "all will be early astir. I will bring you my own coffee; best drink it and eat a bit, or you will faint."

I drank the hot coffee, the man standing by took the jug, then going upstairs roused his prisoners.

"I will tell you when they are dressed," he whispered. "Meanwhile, 'tis not quite light yet, you can go out for awhile in the basement for a breath of air, so ye keep the cloak on."

I went out. The first of grey dawn was scarce entered the wide courtyard, a few sparrows faintly twittered in the trees. I saw, near by, the square stone which marked the spot where Anne Boleyn suffered. The fresh air from the river revived me. I plucked an ivy-leaf, and walked softly up and down in the basement. None could see me; all were buried in sleep,

and I the ghost of a fateful dawn. A voice from the river far-off called out from some outward-bound boat, "To France." Thither should I soon be speeding, away from all this. Up and down I went, rested by the exercise, the morning freshness, and the liberty. In about twenty minutes the warder called me, beckoning from the door. I went in.

"My nephew is made all right," said he, "by a promise of ten guineas. Many visitors will come this morning; so, milady, will it please you go out with some of them?"

"I will," said I, giving him an address I had writ, to come for the hundred guineas.

"'Tis a risk," said he, trembling with avarice, with fear.

"Say sent by Ivyleaf," I suggested, having one in my hand; and grateful, desirous of helping this ignorant plotter who had helped me.

"I will do so"—he brightened—"'tis but to look at the plant here, to remember."

"Do not announce me," said I, "nor come in."

We had gained the top step; he unlocked the door cautiously, and I went in. Balmerino, though called, had chosen to sleep again, and grunted audibly when the door creaked.

"'Tis all right, Nuttall," called out Sergius, "I will wake him in good time."

"Very well, milord," said Nuttall. "'Tis now four o'clock, and a fine morning."

"Thank God! the last," muttered Sergius with a sigh, "in these infernal walls. Oh hell! if you are captivity, you are enough. Oh, for some friend! but all are leagues away—worlds away —buried in sleep."

The table was strewn with cards; pens and ink were on it too; the room in darkness, streaked with grey-dawn light. Sergius was restless; I stood in shadow, watching him unseen.

"My God," said he, "to part from all we love! Where is the justice? Is a German hog so precious in your sight, that Englishmen must die that he may be upheld?"

"Thank God your recantation is but form," thought I, exultant, clasping my hands hard, "is but for Boyd's sake, wrung from you, doubtless, by milady's prayers for her son."

"Helen!" he murmured, presently. I started, thinking he saw me. "Ours was no fair parting. My darling, I will to sleep again and dream of you. In sleep you return to me—I will recall you. Helen!" His head rested on the pillow, his eyes closed.

A smile came to his weary, worn face, as though some pleasant thought held him. "So it

will be," he murmured. "Once asleep for ever, she will come back to me, for ever!"

I waited till he slept; then kneeling beside him put my face close to his, my arm about his neck, and so kneeling, slept too.

Not for very long. Balmerino creaked in, awaking us. Sergius did not stir from very astonishment.

I laughed, without, however, moving. My sable-cloak had fallen from my shoulders, and formed a light-brown ring around me on the floor.

"Upon my soul!" said Balmerino, half aghast, "Sergius!"

"Not my fault," he smiled, with infinite contentment. "Oh, Bal, this is Heaven!"

"All right," said he, "I had no such awakening. Nuttall woke me, the villain, at four o'clock, please ye. Suppose I had better go."

"Stay if you like," said I.

"I hope I know better." He retreated, still a little mystified.

"Don't talk," said Sergius, "I am too happy to listen, to reply. Oh, Helen! I seemed to have you near me all night, and had delightful dreams of you."

"I was on the stairs," said I, "warm as a dormouse, wrapped in Nuttall's cloak; near

you, my dear, while you thought me fled for ever. Promise to believe me always near, as I shall be. Tell me, am I keeping you from better thoughts, from prayer?"

"No," said he, "love is prayer. Oh, Nell, this is happiness. Did you see Balmerino's face?"

"Yes," I laughed, "lucky 'twas not Cromartie. Oh, my darling! the last day—the last!"

"There must be a last day, sweet. A thousand years would to me leave it the same bitterness of parting. Do not weep, Helen."

"I will try not; but you have been so good to me, so patient, so noble. How poor, weak, and worthless is the return. I have not tried, humanly speaking, to save your life. Had I loved you less, I might; but to write, to think of your danger calmly, was beyond me. This worthless, inactive sympathy is all—all I have done for you. What must you deem of such love? Can you forgive me?"

"You could have done nothing, dearest. All has been tried by experienced and able friends —all. It is fate, lightened by your love, your sweet sympathy. Do not let your mind get clouded with illusions about it—'tis fate. Nor would I have your memory of me embittered by thinking of impossible attempts you might

have made to save me. You could, assure yourself, do nothing in that way to help me—all has been tried. This is the truest kindness this the kindest comfort. This I value beyond all efforts of the most devoted friendship, for this is love; beyond life, for this is imperishable!"

Then he rose, and, lifting it, I wrapped my sable cloak about his shoulders. The dawn, though summer, was chilly.

"Suffer it," said I. "Your having worn it will make it precious to me."

I crept under it to hide thronging tears, wiping them away fast as they arose, my arms about his neck. The warm fur, warm and soft, seemed to still the trembling of my heart, and, lifting my head from its folds, I could smile into his calm, downbent face.

"Was ever poor Hielander so tormented?" said he, "wrapped up in furs in August, hugged to annihilation, like a baby."

"One of Cromartie's?" I suggested. He laughed.

"Yes, there will be a deal of parental and filial hugging there this blessed day; but who can escape destiny, except Balmerino?"

"I will go bid him a kind farewell."

He held me fast, bidding me go at once.

Nuttall brought in coffee and breakfast. We all sat down and partook sparingly of it, Sergius' eyes on me all the whole time, eager and sparkling.

Life and animation seemed coming back to him in this near prospect of release from the hated prison. Death was less hateful, to his high spirit than the slow consuming hours pent in walls.

He said so, as freed from the cloak we walked up and down; bade me be comforted for him, free; assured me he felt elate, even joyous, as if with assurance of a happy destiny hereafter; and, having given me five minutes to take leave of Balmerino, which we did gravely and affectionately, hurried to reclaim me.

"Home will be here soon," said he, as he kissed me. "I shall pray for you, Nell, more than for myself, I believe."

"No, no."

"Well, then, you are myself. Nell, I am getting excited; the rapture, the joy of freedom is coming upon me. Believe no one who says I suffer at the last. Believe me only; I shall not suffer. Believe this my darling. Farewell, true heart, best love, brave friend! Farewell, sweetest, dearest comforter! No long time now to freedom. A million blessings light on you with this kiss! Farewell!"

Home now entered, and Lady Farringdon, who briefly and kindly saluting the prisoners, hurried me away, down the fatal stairs, out into the crowded streets. Vast mobs were assembling from all quarters; our carriage had great difficulty in making its way. Housetops were being clomb on to, windows occupied. Wretches! One rush of that surging crowd would have rescued them; yet none, coward like, would venture. Arrived at Mayfair, I went to my room and packed, afraid lest after, despair should unnerve me; and after washing, attired myself for a journey. A dull excitement upheld me, even to remembering proper gratuities to my attendants. I felt as if it were I who was to be executed. Would to God it had been! I sent for General Tremenheere and wished him farewell. He was hurried, nor asked whither I was going. Excitement, like a fiery wine, possessed all men.

Lady Dorothy, calm, yet sympathetic, ordered in lunch; we even sat down to it, though neither touched a crumb, listening—listening.

The sound of a cannon boomed through the air.

"'Tis at the Tower," said she. We both looked at the clock—five minutes past twelve. At last he was free, could suffer no more! Oh, happy

Sergius, free! A haunting pain came to my head, to my heart, confusing me; active woe seemed dead.

We saw from the window crowds hurrying by, excited, possessed, yet silent; many women were weeping. A knock came to the door; 'twas the warder, Nuttall. I bade the footman show him into the library, and, going to my room, counted out the hundred guineas, adding ten, that he might receive his reward intact. In the midst of my misery I felt obliged to this humble wretch, and expressed this to him, bidding him count the gold. This he would not do, "trusting to my ladyship's honour."

"Nor would I have come now," said he, "but that later on I should be missed, be noticed."

He expresed a rough sort of sympathy with them. His heart seemed touched, though exultation (poor wretch!) at the possession of this wealth predominated, as he hurried off with his prize. Lady Farringdon, none curious at this interview, was still at the window.

"Here is Mr. Home," said she.

Home came in, white to the lips.

"Are you ready?" said he to me, saluting Lady Dorothy, who forced some wine on him.

Lady Farringdon, who knew whither we were

bound, sent a footman for a hackney; and soon, my few possessions in it, we were going Thamesward.

"You travel as my cousin," said he, entering my name so on the passport, which, duly vised, he had for both, and soon we were dropping down the Thames.

I went on deck, and looked at the grey wicked Tower, deserted now, and silent; empty for me of interest. Sergius was not there, he was free! Ah, wonderful and mysterious essence! Ah, soul, elate, inextinguishable! Ah, mind, whose bright particles, freed, must float upward to their source!"

As I had watched the dawn, I watched the sunset. No grief was now mine. Grief is bitter—it has in it remorse. A gentle wind stirred the light fur of my cloak like a caress, and, drawing it round me, while Home silently paced the deck, the words seemed to float to me from the Infinite—to console, to comfort: "'Grieve not for one who is now free, enfranchised, at rest; 'Inheritor of more than earth can give!'"

THE END.

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